Daily Report

Central Eurasia

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FBIS-SOV-96-053 *18 March 1996*

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Russia: Grachev: Troops To Begin Withdrawal From Chechnya in Apr

LD1803122096 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1203 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Mikhail Shevtsov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW March 18 (Itar-Tass) — Russian Defence minister Pavel Grachev said on Monday that federal forces would start a gradual withdrawal from Chechnya next month and made it clear that the conflict could have been settled earlier had it not been for the peace talks launched with the rebels last summer on orders of premier Viktor Chernomyrdin.

"A gradual withdrawal of military units and formations, not engaged in special operations, outside Chechnya will begin in April as the president has promised", Grachev told reporters referring to a Friday decision of the Russian Security Council.

However, he added that the army would continue to assist the Interior troops in holding special operations until the remaining separatists are routed completely.

Special operations will be also necessary to deal with the crime wave in the republic. Grachev said 90 per cent of its residents are unemployed which triggers a wave of banditism, burglaries, robberies. New criminal gangs may emerge which will not be subordinated to anyone, he said.

Grachev said he was a supporter of a "complex approach" to the Chechen settlement which includes both military and political ways. "The situation in Chechnya cannot be solved only by power methods, there should be a combination of military, political and social-economic methods of the settlement", he added.

The minister made it clear that had it not been for the peace talks launched last summer with Chechen separatists on orders of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, the conflict in Chechnya could have been settled earlier.

Grachev said he had predicted the current development of the situation yet in 1995 and had warned that a suspension of combat activities after the hostage drama in Budennovsk would negatively tell on the whole situation in Chechnya.

Today Russian forces are shelling the last bases of Chechen separatists, but in the summer of 1995 they had to quit combat activities after the separatists under the command of Shamil Basayev raided the southern town of Budennovsk where they seized several thousand hostages.

They conditioned their release by peace talks in Chechnya. Chernomyrdin personally interfered to settle the drama peacefully and met the demands. Talks began in Groznyy resulting in a military agreement which had never been observed in reality.

Russia: Minister Mikhaylov Interviewed on Chechnya Agenda

MM1503140796 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA Weekend Edition in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 3

[Interview with Vyacheslav Mikhaylov, Russian Federation minister for nationalities affairs and federal relations, by RIA "Novosti" correspondent Aleksandr Nadzharov; place and date not given: "Peace for Chechnya: Option No. ... Russian Leaders Do Not Rule Out Talks With Dzhokhar Dudayev Via Intermediaries"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the very near future the Russian Federation Security Council will hand down the long-awaited decision on ways to overcome the Chechen crisis. Various proposals on the problem have already been discussed in the Kremlin. In particular, the government's plan and the report by analysts from the president's staff. As ever in such cases, there have been reports in the press about decisions allegedly having already been made. Nonetheless, only the head of state can declare it done. What will be the president's option for a solution of one of the new Russia's most agonizing problems? Vyacheslav Mikhaylov, Russian Federation minister for nationalities affairs and federal relations, answers an RIA "Novosti" correspondent's questions.

[Nadzharov] The quest for ways of ending the Chechen conflict, has been entrusted, as we know, to a wide variety of study groups. What decision could President Yeltsin make?

[Mikhaylov] The most balanced, naturally. The thing is that "victory" for a particular option cannot be seen as a proper enough way out of an acute situation. All actions by the federal authorities must be comprehensive, embracing the best elements of all the ideas. In short, we could be talking about a sensible compromise. Not only between the warring sides, but also between the different proposals for overcoming the crisis.

[Nadzharov] What should this comprehensive solution involve, in your view?

[Mikhaylov] First of all, of course, constitutional-legal methods of settling such crises. Unfortunately, laws have not yet been devised and adopted on the terms and procedure for the use of armed forces on our own territory, on combating terrorism, on liability for encroachment on the country's territorial integrity, on legislatively changing the status of a component of the

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Federation. In short, we are talking about something that is long overdue — the establishment of a full and distinct legal base that is absolutely essential for the settlement of crisis situations. This must be done as soon as possible.

If we are talking about political actions, talks with representatives of various Chechen groups (except for the overtly criminal) must be stepped up in a big way. In this connection it is difficult to overstate the importance of the intra-Chechen dialogue that is being vigorously conducted by Doku Zavgayev's government. The special supervisory commission that was led by General Anatoliy Romanov and Aslan Maskhadov might resume its work. Although I am not very clear about some of Maskhadov's recent actions in connection with events in Gudermes, Kizlyar, and Groznyy, where terrorists took hostages and went about blatantly robbing the population and destroying vital facilities in the Chechen capital. Moreover, there is the possibility of the convening of an Assembly of Representatives of Chechnya Peoples and the broadest possible dialogue with all strata of the republic's population: with politicians, elders, spiritual leaders. In my view, we must step up talks with those who have real influence on the situation in Chechnya, not excluding the field commanders and Dudayev — the talking could be done via intermediaries with the proper authority. Every opportunity must be exploited for the sake of people's lives, their well-being, and freedom from suffering.

[Nadzharov] All this should take place, no doubt, on the basis of an ongoing solution of the social and everyday problems of the civilian population?

[Mikhaylov] Of course. Under Dudayev the republic's economy was destroyed and no pensions and benefits were paid in Chechnya. The federal organs of power will continue to compensate for the damage caused by the combat. Social payments, the restoration of all public utilities, and rebuilding work will be carried out on the basis of specific funding, whereby the federal authorities will be able to fully monitor all budget expenditure.

[Nadzharov] The seizure of a peaceful ship in the Mediterranean and the hijacking of a Turkish civil aircraft.... It appears that the Chechen problem has gone into international orbit, so to speak, of late.

[Mikhaylov] Therefore diplomatic steps must be a prominent part of the solution. Indeed, the conflict zone is not just Chechnya proper. Dudayev has made a massive effort to spread it to the whole of the Transcaucasus area and countries of faraway foreign parts. What is needed in strong international condemnation of terrorism and the debunking of the myth of the religious nature of the conflict — a thesis actively propagandized by Dudayev.

[Nadzharov] Does what you say mean a switch from military confrontation to the exercise of an exclusively peaceful influence on General Dudayev's regime?

[Mikhaylov] As for using force, I am sure that large-scale combat operations will not be able to resolve the Chechen problem. After all, it has strong roots going back over two centuries. The consequences of the current conflict will be long-lasting too. Well, what we need to display is patience as well as persistence.

[Nadzharov] Many people in Russia and, indeed, in the West are worried: Will the Kremlin's prestige suffer as a result of the actions we are talking about at the moment?

[Mikhaylov] Exactly the opposite, I think: It will confirm that the federal authorities are capable of doing subtle, intelligent, meticulous work to resolve one of the most complex problems. Indeed, what we are talking about primarily is the protection of human rights and genuine democracy. We must avoid the very possibility of harming the civilian population. As for special local operations against criminal terrorist groups — and a multitude of mercenaries and criminals from all over the place has congregated in Chechnya to make money out of the war — they are essential. It is in combining these measures that the art of today's Russian politicians should lie. A distinction should be made between terrorists robbing and killing civilians and taking women and children hostage, bandits, and those who have taken Dudayev's side for reasons of revenge for the deaths of their nearest and dearest or destruction of their homes or because they have been misled.

Moscow is aware that the peace process in Chechnya, Russian army reforms, and the creation of special antiterrorist subunits capable of neutralizing the actions of well-trained Dudayev gunman are all equally important. There must be guarantees of the safety of the civilian population.

[Nadzharov] No doubt we are all aware that the consequences of the Chechen tragedy will be felt for years to come. Indeed, aside from those with whom we can hold talks and conclude agreements, there are groups fighting under Dudayev's banners that are not controlled by him at all or by anyone else. Tell me straight, should we expect further bloody acts by Dudayev's gunmen like Budennovsk?

[Mikhaylov] Without going into details, I will say that there is pretty accurate information on acts of terrorism and sabotage in the offing. They must be prevented. The inter-Chechen dialogue now being stepped up is

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of considerable significance for the solution of this and other problems. I think I am not wrong when I say that the current exacerbation of the situation in Groznyy is the consequence of the successful talks conducted by the government of the Chechen Republic and combined federal forces command in various parts of Chechnya. Dudayev is clearly afraid of a split among his devotees and destruction of his regime's social base. Peace is not the most comfortable habitat for leaders of this type.

[Nadzharov] The solution of the Chechen problem must not distract us from the general political situation in Russia. And it will be determined by the upcoming presidential election....

[Mikhaylov] Of course, Boris Yeltsin's election success depends largely on the results of the federal authorities' activities in Chechnya. Unfortunately, considerable efforts are being made to play this "card" in the fight for votes. But I do not think this is the best possible political move. It would be in the interests of the electorate and of all Russians if the candidates for the post of head of state were to join forces with the Federal Assembly deputies in helping the country out of the protracted Chechen crisis. Political maturity and political artistry — all this would be a factor for the voters and for Russia's future.

Russia: Security Council Agrees on 'Non-Force' Policy in Chechnya

LD1503210396 Moscow INTERFAX in English 2026 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 15 (Interfax) — Those at the session of the Russian Security Council in Moscow Friday agreed that the situation in Chechnya can be settled without the use of force, i.e. by exclusively political methods, the Russian presidential press service said.

The session, which was chaired by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, considered a complex plan to surmount the Chechen crisis. The plan has been crafted proceeding from the proposals earlier submitted by the governmental commission and the presidential council group, the same source said.

"Despite the differences in the shades of the positions, all those involved in the discussion were unanimous on the main points. First, conditions have matured for a radical shift in the federal Chechnya policy towards non-force, exclusively political methods of settlement. Second, the devised plan corresponds with national security requirements," the same source said.

The key elements of the approved plan will be unveiled by the Russian president after the plan is finalized, taking into consideration the observations made at the session, the press service said.

Russia: Dudayev Warns of 'Worse to Come' in Chechen War

MS1803095796 London INDEPENDENT in English 18 Mar 96 p 11

[Interview with Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev by Phil Reeves in southern Chechnya; date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Southern Chechnya — As the echoes of another day of Russian bombing rolled along the valley below. The Chechen separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev sat in his country hideout yesterday and vowed to take revenge against the Kremlin for blindly trying to bomb Chechnya into submission.

Ten days after delivering yet another nasty jolt to the Yeltsin administration by launching a major assault on Groznyy, the rebel commander-in-chief dismissed the attack as "small-scale" and warned that there was far worse to come.

"Large scale actions are being prepared in Russia and a long way outside Russia," he said as he sat on a sofa watched over by two Kalashnikov-wielding bodyguards during a late-night interview with six western news organisations, including the Independent.

After more than a year on the run, Dudayev, a 52-year-old ex-Soviet air force general now clad in the fatigues of a guerrilla fighter, looks surprisingly relaxed and fit, despite constantly moving because of fears for his life.

Occasionally he laughed bitterly as he launched into long diatribes against the West for supporting Russia with multi-billion-dollar loans and, in particular, for agreeing to accept it into the Council of Europe.

But, mindful of Mr Yeltsin's publicly expressed desire to see their "president" shot, his aides were clearly nervous about security. It was only possible to interview him after a four-hour journey in a closed truck to the orchard-dotted, mud-bound foothills under armed rebel escort. We were taken to five different Chechen bases, several of them patrolled by fighters still in their teens.

"Tens of thousands of people are making a living trying to assassinate me," said General Dudayev, after reeling off a list of examples: a bomb in front of his car, grenade attacks on his offices, and — more exotically — a knife which he claims to have been given. It had a location detector hidden in the handle.

But even if he was assassinated, the Chechen conflict would continue, he claimed, after indicating that a successor has already been found. "We are not as simple

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as you think, we have made preparations. After my death, Russia's ordeals will increase tenfold."

In a four-hour interview in which he was at times angry, but more often boastful and rhetorical, General Dudayev did his best to fuel rumours that he has chemical or nuclear arms by referring to a "secret weapon", which was "capable of bringing a continent to its knees within a few hours". He said: "No one has any protection against these weapons. There are no missile fields, no land defences, nothing." He also confirmed that Chechen fighters, who are Islamic, have trained in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

As he spoke, Russian commanders continued to try to pressure Chechen villages into signing peace agreements by threatening to bomb them if they do not. They have made clear they are willing to carry out this sanction by repeatedly shelling settlements deemed to be hotbeds of resistance.

ITAR-TASS news agency yesterday said clouds of smoke could be seen coming from the village of Samashki in western Chechnya, and the sounds of heavy shellfire and rocket attacks were clearly heard from Achkhoy-Martan, 10 km (six miles) from Samashki.

It quoted three teenagers who had managed to leave during the night as saying the village was badly damaged and many homes ablaze.

A Russian human rights official said on Saturday that troops were using tanks and multiple-launch Grad rockets against Samashki but refugees reported that many civilians were still in the village.

Between 6,000 and 8,000 of Samashki's 16,000 people managed to leave on Friday through a corridor provided by Russian forces, he said. Russian officials usually claim that civilians are evacuated before the attacks start, but aid workers say they have treated many women and children for missing limbs and other bomb-related injuries over the last 15 months.

The agreements, under which villages undertake to expel any resident rebel fighters and hand over weapons, are tied in with Boris Yeltsin's increasingly desperate efforts to end the war before Russia's presidential election in June. Once enough of them are signed, the Kremlin is expected to order the start of troop withdrawals in the hope of convincing Russian voters that peace has at last arrived.

Such manoeuvres have failed to impress General Dudayev, who is clearly enraged by the bombings. "It is terrorism," he said. "As long as we have strength, there will be revenge for this kind of violence."

He said the agreements were a deliberate attempt to "create the conditions for civil war after the troops pull out." He believes that hard-line elements in Moscow are fuelling the conflict in the hope that it will last indefinitely.

However, he did not rule out all hope. Although he was adamant he would never have peace talks again with the "criminal and illegal" Yeltsin regime he said he would be prepared to negotiate with the Communist Party if it took power in Russia.

"Today's communists are not the communists you have to be afraid of in Russia," he said. "The communists you have to be afraid of are sitting in their armchairs, disguised as democrats in power."

Russia: Troops Repel Militants' Attempt To Seize Groznyy Hotel

LD1703141696 Moscow Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvy in Russian 0900 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] On a whole the situation in Groznyy is calm today. Yesterday evening at 2300 Moscow time heavy firing from automatic weapons broke out in the town center. ITAR-TASS learned today that a group of militants blocked several subunits of the republic's Interior Ministry near the Dynamo stadium and attempted to seize the hotel where accredited journalists of the central mass media in Chechnya live. The militants' attack was repulsed by federal forces.

All in all, according to Russia's representative office in Chechnya, over the past 24 hours the positions of the federal forces have been fired at on 16 occasions, and that includes seven occasions in Groznyy; six servicemen were wounded.

Russia: Security Forces Detain Dudayev's Liaison Officer

LD1603185196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1718 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] GROZNYY, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — Russian security forces in Groznyy have detained Chechen separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev's liaison officer who delivered large amounts of hard currency from the outlawed president to his supporters in Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey.

Officials of the Federal Security Service (FSB) allowed journalists, including Itar-Tass correspondent, to meet him in Groznyy on Saturday.

The handcuffed person sitting before the journalists appeared to be of a heavy build. He identified himself as Aleksey.

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Aleksey 34, Russian and a resident of Moscow, declined to talk about his family. He said he "came to Chechnya at the end of April 1995 in hope to earn some money here." Soon after that Chechen rebels signed a contract with him.

He received his first baptism of fire, which was at the same time a test for his loyalty, in an operation near Gudermes. Aleksey and two other rebels were ordered to lay mines under railway tracks. The order was fulfilled. Aleksey said "I do not know who was blown up, but I heard the explosion."

When asked by the journalists that the train might have carried civilians, including children, Aleksey kept silent.

He said he had passed his second test of loyalty when he had to be present at the execution of Chechen civilians. He was later told that "if the relatives of the killed find out that you were present during the execution, they will find you anywhere...."

At the end of May 1995, the atmosphere among rebels was such that "one week would have been enough to rout illegal formations in Chechnya. Demoralisation among militiamen was complete and I saw it. They were hiding away. They did not want to obey orders. They were treated brutally in order to encourage others," he said.

In June, peace talks began at the headquarters of the mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). While politicians negotiated, illegal armed formations "were putting themselves in order," as their field commanders said, in the mountains.

Aleksey said that conflicts had become common among various groups of rebels. Not so long ago, the supporters of Salman Raduyev, who led a raid on the Dagestani town of Kizlyar in January 1996, clashed with the supporters of Chechen military chief Aslan Maskhadov.

Aleksey confessed that he had been also used to deliver Dudayev's money to Bulgaria and Turkey, but declined to give any specific names.

He said he had moved freely among rebels and had an ID made out to Aleksey Danilenko. The document, which was signed by Dudayev and bore his office's stamp, enabled him to request any assistance from Dudayev's forces and exempted him from personal searches. In Russia he also moved around without trouble owing to his Slav appearance.

Aleksey tends to explain his arrest by some disagreements between Chechen rebels.

He said the people of field commander Vakhid Murdashev had known about his last trip to Moscow, during which he had carried 800,000 U.S. dollars in cash, and demanded that he gave them the money. However, Aleksey refused because the money was intended for other people in Moscow.

Immediately after that he was detected and arrested by FSB agents. During the arrest one agent was killed. The money was confiscated.

Russia: Situation in Bamut, Samashki, Nadterechnyy Districts Updated

LD1603215896 Moscow NTV in Russian 1900 GMT 16 Mar 96

[From the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Very contradictory reports are coming in from Chechnya. In particular, the local authorities in Groznyy have said there are at least 300 Chechen fighters still in the town. The local authorities fear a new massed provocation by Dudayev's men.

Meanwhile, federal troops have shelled the districts and settlements of Bamut and Samashki. They are threatening to clear the locality of Chechen fighters.

Talks on reconciliation and the surrender of weapons are taking place in other districts.

One gets the impression that all of that is happening in different worlds, but it is all happening in the same republic.

Here is a report by our special correspondents from Chechnya.

[Correspondent] Treaties on peace and accord were signed with a whole series of villages in Nadterechnyy District today.

Sanakiy Arbiyev, first deputy prime minister of Chechnya, Zavgayev's deputy, came to the homeland of the head of the Chechen government.

Nadterechnyy District, which has practically not suffered from the war, was always a bulwark of the opposition to Dudayev. They supported their fellow countrymen Zavgayev here, were friends with federal troops, and thereby preserved their homes entire. A treaty on peace and accord for the inhabitants of this district is just a simple formality. However, representatives of Zavgayev's government intend to observe this formality according to all the rules here.

[Begin Arbiyev recording] The preliminary work was carried out a long time beforehand. [passage omitted] We are setting the task of visiting every settlement and talking to people to find out what their mood is. [end recording]

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[Correspondent] Nadterechnyy District is probably the only place in Chechnya where Russian soldiers and officers can feel at ease. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] The paradox of life in Chechnya today is that in one district they are trying to establish peace while large-scale military operations are being carried out in another at the same time.

This morning, federal troops in Chechnya began an operation to seize the mountainous village of Bamut. Interior troops subunits with fire support from two divisions of self-propelled artillery pieces and army aviation are fighting on the outskirts of the village.

There are no peaceful inhabitants left in Bamut. Fighters who have taken shelter in trenches and former missile silos are putting up fierce resistance to the troops.

Units of the Russian Army, which have left Bamut for neighboring Orekhovo and Staryy Achkoy, are carrying out operations there to destroy Dudayev's men who have broken out of their encirclement.

According to military information, so far 20 fighters have been killed and several tens have been wounded. It is not yet known what the federal forces' losses are.

Artillery shelling of the village of Samashki began this morning. [passage omitted]

To all appearances, federal forces will begin the operation in Samashki in the next few hours.

Russia: Federal Command Negotiates With Samashki Villagers

LD1703161096 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1337 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] GROZNYY, March 17 (Interfax) — Negotiations are under way with inhabitants of the Samashki Village not far from Bamut (western Chechnya) so that the villagers force the militants leave this place, a spokesman for the Chechen Interior Ministry told Interfax on Sunday.

According to the Interior Ministry's spokesman, Samashki suburbs remain blocked by federal forces.

According to the federal command, militants who earlier took part in the fighting near the Sernovodsk town, have entrenched themselves in the village.

Meanwhile, federal forces continued on Sunday an operation to destroy the militants who are holding the Bamut village.

The commander of the federal forces Lt Gen Vyacheslav Tikhomirov told Interfax last night that all approaches to the village are blocked which excludes the possible breakthrough on the part of other militants to support the Bamut grouping, "particularly for the Samashki village."

"The army jets, artillery and armored vehicles are attacking the militants' fortified positions in Bamut and the adjacent hills," said the general.

Tikhomirov did not rule out that the militants using fortifications and the infrastructure of the former silo for launching strategic missiles, will be able to hold out in Bamut for some more time.

Russia: Federal Troops Besiege Sernovodsk, Orekhovoye, Katyr-Yurt

LD1803080896 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0743 GMT 18 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 18 (Itar-Tass) — Federal troops did not use heavy artillery guns to shell the village of Samashki in western Chechnya last night. But the villages of Sernovodsk, Orekhovoye and Katyr-Yurt in a zone 15-20 kilometers southwest of Groznyy were blocked by armoured vehicles. The district centre of Achkhoy-Martan was fully surrounded, according to Ruslan Martagov, the press secretary of Chechen leader Doku Zavgayev.

Martagov said that the aggravation of armed confrontation in western Chechnya had been due to the fact that "the military believe that numerous combatants who fled Bamut and Sernovodsk are now holed up in Samashki."

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CIS: ITAR-TASS Carries Press Review for 16 Mar

LD1603060396 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0542 GMT 16 Mar 96

["Press Review" — ITAR-TASS headline]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA reports that the State Duma lower house of parliament passed a resolution to annul the decision of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR dated 12 December 1991 which scrapped the agreement on the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Duma resolution tells the President of the Russian Federation to work out a set of measures aimed at further deepening of integration of Russia, Belarus and other former republics of the USSR and call a national referendum on gradual strengthening of the unity of the peoples united in the Soviet Union.

"If we assume that the agreement on the formation of the USSR regains effect on the territory of the former Soviet Union, a few paradoxical questions arise at once," says KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA. "Question one is whether Russia is a part of 'the new Union?' What other republics are members? Secondly, the Russian Federation appears to acquire an uncertain legal, state and international status. At present, Russia's international legal status is that of a legal successor to the USSR and in that capacity it is a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. If the USSR is restored, should Russia be thrown out of the Council? And who is to replace it?"

TRUD draws the attention of its readers to the time-serving character of the Duma's populist move. It was clearly devised as an election campaign ploy, the newspaper suggests. "It was a frank attempt to play on the sentiments of the people who were badly affected by the collapse of the great country and, obviously, the lack of understanding that any unilateral action on the part of Russia can only multiply the anti-integration sentiments among certain forces in the Commonwealth member-states and lay the ground for no confidence in Moscow, as well as give rise to new speculations based on nationalist emotions."

The airfield in Zhukovskiy, just outside Moscow, on March 17 will witness the beginning of a new stage in the development of Russian aviation: Russia's next century aircraft - a second-generation supersonic airliner SPS-2 will be rolled out for the first time, IZVESTIYA reports. The newspaper says the Big Eight industrialised countries and their leading aerospace companies will pool their efforts to implement the large-scale project. Russia and the United States, in particular, open a joint six-month programme of tests and experiments aboard the Tu-144LL flying lab, one of a series of aircraft built in the 1970s by the Tupolev ANTK.

KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA reports that a unique super-train is now undergoing tests on a railway track near St. Petersburg. The train, which can travel at speeds of up to 360 kilometers an hour, was built in Spain and is intended to run between Moscow and Berlin.

KRASNAYA ZVEZDA marks an anniversary of the Plesetsk space centre. Over the past 30 year, 1,862 artificial earth satellites were launched into space from Plesetsk in northern European Russia, the newspaper says.

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Russia: Primakov Stresses Moscow's Opposition to NATO Expansion

LD1503190496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1658 GMT 15 Mar 96

[By Aleksandr Potemkin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] WARSAW, March 15 (Itar-Tass) — Russia says "no" to NATO's expansion and urges a quest for the way out of the situation, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov told a news conference which concluded the working programme of his official two-day visit in Poland.

Primakov stressed again that a possible advance of NATO's military structures to Russia's borders prompts Russia's concern and does not suit its interests. Russia and Poland have different views on the matter, he noted. A debate with Polish partners on this matter was "quite useful" as "we now have a better understanding of each other's reasoning," he said. "We believe there is a need for a dialogue to find some solutions, some formula including the necessary protection of both Poland and Russia against concern," he said.

Polish Foreign Minister Dariusz Rosati who participated in the news conference said again that it is only "full membership in NATO that will ensure Poland's national security." He also said that Poland is not to be satisfied "either with possible unilateral guarantees of security by NATO and the United States or criss-cross guarantees by NATO and Russia," although "these proposals have not been discussed" during the visit of the guest from Moscow.

Summing up the results of his stay in Poland, Primakov said that obvious mutual wish to develop contacts was manifested during the discussion of a multitude of questions of bilateral relations.

He also gave a clear answer to the question about former Polish prime minister Josef Oleksy who to this day is being accused in Poland of cooperation with the KGB and the Russian intelligence, while the investigation of the matter has not been completed. "It is beyond my duties as a Foreign Minister to answer this question," Primakov said. "However, I regard myself humanly obliged to do so. As soon as such assertions appeared in the Polish press I asked for Josef Oleksy's file. I was told that there is no such file, which means that Oleksy had no connections with Russian intelligence," Primakov said.

Russia: Primakov Speaks at End of Poland Visit on Oleksy, NATO

LD1503171596 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1500 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Video report from Warsaw by correspondent Viktor Lyubovtsev, with recorded comments by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov; from the "Novosti" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov is nearing the end of his official visit to Poland. During his visit he had a meeting with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski. In particular they discussed issues that may be raised during the upcoming top level talks in Moscow between the presidents of the two countries.

The dates for Kwasniewski's visit to Russia were also agreed. The visit will be from 9-11 April.

[Lyubovtsev] At his final news conference the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry gave frank answers to the very searching questions asked by the journalists. For instance, concerning Jozef Oleksy, the former Polish prime minister, who was suspected of having links with the KGB, he said:

[Primakov] Oleksy had no links as an agent with Soviet or Russian intelligence.

[Lyubovtsev] As for the so-called corridor from Belarus to Kaliningrad Region, the term itself is a misunderstanding, since there has been only talk of modernizing the highway for the carriage of transit freight.

Naturally, everyone was interested in the talks about the NATO problem. Differences of position remain on this matter.

[Primakov] However, the discussions on this matter were fairly useful, it seems to me, because we now understand better each other's arguments, and we consider — I think my Polish counterpart could confirm this — that a dialogue is needed to find solutions that will create a formula, including on the need to save Poland and Russia from any anxiety.

[Lyubovtsev] The main result of the first visit to Poland for almost eight years by a Russian foreign minister is the new quality of mutual understanding between the two countries and the excellent prospects for partnership and increasingly close cooperation.

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Russia: Yeltsin's Visit to Ukraine Previewed

LD1503214696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1827 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, March 15 (Interfax - Ukraine) — In the course of President Yeltsin's forthcoming visit to Kiev, Ukraine and Russia are expected to sign not only a general political treaty and agreements on the Black Sea Fleet splitting but a number of bilateral intergovernmental agreements.

Thus, in particular, the agreements "On common exploration and use of outer space on the basis of the International Distant Space Center" and "On founding an international Space Center in order to explore distant outer space" are to be signed in the course of the visit, a usually well informed source told Interfax - Ukraine.

The agreements "On conditions of the accommodation and serving of the Russian diplomatic missions in Ukraine and the Ukrainian missions in Russia", "On rules and conditions of domestic shipping", "On the founding and statute of activities of information-cultural centers" are also expected to be signed in the course of the visit.

On top of that, the Russian side proposes to prepare agreements on broadcasting of the Russian TV and radio programmes and on cooperation in the field of mass media, the source said.

The work on draft agreements is currently underway and is to be completed on the eve of the visit, the source disclosed. The source does not exclude that the amendments may be made to the list of agreements and to their contents.

The visit of the Russian president to Kiev is scheduled for early April.

Russia: French President, Moscow Mayor Discuss Russia Situation

LD1503172196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1715 GMT 15 Mar 96

[By Andrey Yarushin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] PARIS, March 15 (Itar-Tass) — French President Jacques Chirac and Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov on Friday discussed the situation in Russia and various aspects of the development of cooperation between the two countries.

"All political and public figures for whom Russia's fate and future are not indifferent, are closely watching the preparation for the elections and the situation in Russia," Luzhkov told journalists.

The Moscow mayor said that Chirac "is appraising the present pre-election situation in Russia very accurately, and he obviously stands for the continuation of democratic processes and economic reforms."

Speaking about the development of friendly ties and cooperation between the two capitals, Luzhkov said that the prospect for opening a French lycee in Moscow had become real as both sides had found an acceptable solution.

The mayor said he had discussed with the French president the question of preserving the Russian cemetery in Saint-Genevieve-de-Bois near Paris as a memorial, Chirac had promised his assistance in this.

In April, the French president is expected to arrive in Moscow to participate in the G-7 summit meeting on nuclear security.

Despite a very concentrated programme of the president's stay in the Russian capital, "I invited Jacques Chirac to spare some time to continue those contacts which had been started when he was mayor of Paris," Luzhkov said.

Russia: Deputy FM: 'Premature' To Expel Karadzic From Sep Election

LD1503124696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1118 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Mar 15 (Interfax) — It is premature to expel Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic from the democratic process, First Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told Interfax Friday [15 March]. Their participation in the elections, to be held before September 1996 in accordance with the Dayton agreements, is still to be discussed, he noted.

The elections procedure provides for special commissions to set the election qualification and the circle of persons who could be elected to positions of power.

According to agreements reached at Dayton, the elections may not involve persons charged with war crimes in former Yugoslavia.

"Russia does not fully agree with these wordings, because a charge does not mean a conviction," said the diplomat.

"The commission is still to discuss this question. In other words, it has not been settled, and remains liable for coordination," he said.

The future of Mladic and Karadzic is an individual problem. The Hague-based International Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, set up by the U.N. security Council, also

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plans to charge some 50 persons, including Muslims and Croats.

"Who is now able to name the precise number of war criminals? It seems there were more than 50 or 150 of them, because about 20,000 people were killed in former Yugoslavia in the four years of war," said Ivanov.

Russia, which participated in formation of the international tribunal, believes matters should be conducted carefully. "This body should be impartial and help peaceful life in Bosnia, instead of hampering it. This means the international tribunal should take into account all the details, including the political situation," said Ivanov.

Russia plans to discuss these issues with the General Secretary of the International Tribunal, who will soon come to Moscow for consultations with heads of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Interior Ministry and other competent departments (According to IF [INTERFAX] information, he will come to Moscow Monday).

"In order to tackle details, one will have to agree on the general principle. This is what we plan to discuss with the tribunal head," said Ivanov.

Russia: Foreign Ministry Official on Estonian Human Rights

LD1503163396 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1301 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Mar 15 (Interfax) — Moscow can only welcome the ratification by the Estonian Parliament of the European Convention of Basic Human Rights and Freedoms, Aleksandr Udaltsov, deputy director of the Second European Department in the Russian Foreign Ministry, told Interfax Friday.

"This is certainly a positive step by Tallinn. What is important is that this step leads to improvement of the Russian-speaking population's situation in Estonia," he said.

Estonia should move faster towards generally accepted standards in the field of human rights, Udaltsov emphasized.

Tallinn should "amend its legislation, which Moscow believes to be discriminatory, in line with the suggestions made by international experts," he said.

It is equally important, he said, that Estonia join the convention on reducing the number of stateless persons. They make up one third of Estonia's population and all their rights are restricted, Udaltsov said.

Russia: Zaveryukha Restates Russia's Stance on U.S. Chicken Imports

LD1603155996 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1351 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] VORONEZH, March 16 (Interfax) — Russia has held to and will hold to its principal position regarding the import of U.S. poultry, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zaveryukha said at a session on problems of the agricultural-industrial complex in the Russian city of Voronezh Saturday.

Zaveryukha accused the Russian media of "political racketeering" which, he said, the media "fanned" after the Russian Agriculture Ministry's veterinary department suspended the granting of licenses for Russian imports of U.S. chicken leg quarters on February 16.

A final decision on the renewal of U.S. poultry supply to the Russian market is fully contingent upon the U.S. side, Russian Chief Veterinary Inspector Vyacheslav Avilov told Interfax. "This week the United States officially declared additional governmental measures" to control the quality of chicken leg quarters which "mainly meet the requirements put forward by the Russian veterinary authorities," he said.

The U.S. side will in particular introduce additional measures to examine the quality of poultry, in particular to discover the content of insecticides and antibiotics in poultry samples taken from every exporter firm, certify the absence or discovery of chicken diseases indicated in veterinary certificates, etc.

However, the U.S. side has not so far decided on the inspection by U.S. poultry companies of chicken legs to discover whether the poultry is salmonella-ridden, Avilov said. To resolve this issue, the U.S. side has been proposed to "urgently arrange a meeting" between representatives of the sides in order to confirm the register of U.S. companies selected to export poultry to Russia, he said.

The United States has not thus far responded to this proposal although in line with the decision of the Russian Agriculture Ministry's veterinary department poultry supplies on earlier granted licenses will not be let beyond Russia's border from March 16.

Russia: Moscow Examines Iran's Stance on Terrorism Summit

NC1603135396 Moscow Voice of Russia World Service in Persian 1500 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Station commentary from "The World Today" Feature]

[FBIS Translated Text] Cherished listeners. In the past few days, the issue of terrorism has become a very

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urgent topic. This is due to the occurrence of a series of terrorist actions in some countries of the world. The recent increase in terrorist acts highlighted the need for a meeting of the leaders of the greatest countries of the world. Hence, a session was convened at the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Shaykh and the issue of combating terrorism in the context of the elimination of conflict in the Middle East was debated and assessed.

It is completely understandable that the participation of the leaders of the greatest Western countries and Israel had more or less revealed the general climate of the session beforehand. Naturally, the call to support an Arab-Israeli peace trend began at the outset. The terrorist actions of those who wished to disrupt this trend were condemned and denounced.

No other version of the Sharm al-Shaykh session on the current events in the Middle East could possibly be heard as the representatives of the countries opposed to the Arab-Israel talks, or at least to their present form, simply did not participate in the session. Iran also did not attend the session. According to an Iranian radio's commentary, Tehran believes that such gatherings are intended to give a green light for combating the Islamic movements in Palestine and Lebanon.

It is certain, however, that there are some in the capitals of the participating countries, as well as in Moscow, who do not concur with such views. After all in Sharm al-Shaykh, the issue was extensively discussed. Most of the speakers, including Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president, and Butrus-Ghali, the UN secretary, general had first and foremost stressed the internationalized and world-encompassing nature of the scourge of terrorism in the contemporary world.

However, Shim'on Peres, the Israeli prime minister, directly named Iran as a country that supports international terrorism and referred to Tehran as a capital of terrorism. For quite some time, such remarks by the Israeli leaders have ceased to surprise people as it is well-known that at present, Tel Aviv considers Iran its number one enemy in the region.

(?It may be emphasized) that terrorism is not supported by Tehran. At least that is what is gleaned from the Iranian officials statements. Mahmud Mohammadi, the spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, condemned all acts of terrorism on the eve of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit session; however, he was not referring to the hardliners in the Middle East, but to the anti-Iranian groups in Europe, especially, the Iranian Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization.

In any case, Mohammadi called on the EU members to combat t[illegible]nti-Iranian terrorist groups. In this regard, a number of observers believe that such an anti-terrorist call by Iranian diplomats is primarily related to the upcoming visit by the EU delegation to Tehran for talks on the subject of terrorism.

Russia: Russian Nuclear Aid to Iran 'Not Confined' to Bushehr

LD1803112996 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 1012 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Oleg Kuzmin]

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran, 18 March — Russia might help Iran build other nuclear power stations when the Bushehr station is complete, Russian Ambassador to Iran Sergey Tretyakov has said. He told the ABRAR newspaper that the agreement between Russia and Iran on bilateral cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy is not confined to the Bushehr project alone.

On the subject of Washington's anxieties over Russian-Iranian atomic cooperation, the ambassador commented that they are "the problem of the United States, not of Russia." Relations between Russia and Iran are not directed against any other countries but serve the interests of our two states, of peace and of security in the region. Russia is an independent country and is entitled to choose its friends for itself, he said.

According to Sergey Tretyakov, economic links between the two countries have expanded of late but have not yet caught up with the high level of political relations now established by Moscow and Tehran.

Meanwhile, Russia's Zarubezhatomenergostroy [Nuclear Power Construction Abroad] has said it intends to honor its commitment to finish building the Bushehr power station on time, that is, in 55 months. Anatoliy Zhilinskiy, head of the company's Tehran office, told the SALAM newspaper that Iranian subcontractors will spend about a year restoring existing facilities at the station, after which Russian specialists will take over.

One of the main problems, he said, is the absence of technical documentation for German-made equipment already installed at Bushehr. The Iranian nuclear power organization has promised to obtain the documentation. If it cannot do this because of German resistance, then Russian-made equipment will have to be fitted instead. Asked by SALAM about Zarubezhatomenergostroy's interest in building a new nuclear power station in Iran "from scratch," Zhilinskiy said this option would in fact be easier, but Iran has insisted on completing the station, which was started by a German company in the 1970's.

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Russia: Moscow, China Plan To Sign Beijing Declaration

LD1803110296 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1023 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Andrey Varlamov and Andrey Kirillov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 18 (Itar-Tass) — Russia and China plan to sign a Beijing declaration during President Boris Yeltsin's coming visit to at the end of April.

The declaration is expected to touch upon major international issues and the situation in the Asian Pacific region, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Panov told Itar-Tass.

Informed diplomatic sources told Itar-Tass that the Russian President's visit is scheduled for April 24-26.

According to Aleksandr Panov, China is "one of Russia's most important partners both in global and regional affairs. The present relations between Russia and China are unprecedented in scope and their atmosphere of mutual amiability. Their cooperation in international matters is constantly strengthening."

The Russian diplomat described as "certain" the development of constructive interaction of the two countries. During the Russian President's visit, he said, bilateral relations will be examined "through a prism of intensification and deepening.".

An indicator of a new situation on the former Soviet-Chinese border will be given in a quintilateral agreement on confidence-building measures in the military field of the border area. The agreement is due to be signed in Shanghai by the leaders of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

The Russian deputy foreign minister said a U-turn was achieved in the Russia-China trade last year, bringing its overall value to 5.5. billion dollars.

In the future the two countries will consolidate the economic basis of their bilateral relations by focusing on "major projects orientated towards the 21st century."

Priority will be given to power-engineering, transport, and modern communications. In their cross-border cooperation, the two countries will continue to act towards the reduction of barter transactions, the Russian official said.

He also pointed out that military-technical cooperation between Russia and China was "a natural component of economic ties."

Cooperation in this field is being built in line with international commitments on principles of doing no harm to national security and maintaining regional balance, Panov said.

Russia: Soskovets Moves To Unblock Talks With Japan on Special Loan

LD1603100296 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0858 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By Aleksandr Kopnov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TOKYO, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — Russia has moved to pull out of the crisis its five-year negotiations with Japan on the use of a special loan from the Export-Import Bank of Japan.

Russia's First Vice-Premier Oleg Soskovets has sent a message to Prime Minister of Japan Ryutaro Hashimoto putting forth Russia's latest proposals for the use of the 500-million-dollar programme of assistance to Russia announced by Tokyo in 1991 but not implemented since that time.

The delay was caused by the stringent terms on which Japan insisted from the very beginning. As a result of lengthy consultations, Tokyo eventually agreed to reorient the loan from purely humanitarian objectives in the form of emergency supplies of medicines and food to investment projects.

But even after that, Tokyo insisted that the money should be invested in programmes relating to the needs of the Russian Far Eastern region and be publicised as Japanese assistance to its inhabitants.

Soskovets proposed directing the resources to finance ten specific projects on Russian territory, including the investment of some 300 million dollars in six projects designed to improve the social infrastructure of Russia's Far Eastern regions and Siberia. The projects provide for the building of hospitals in Sakhalin, Vladivostok and Yakutia in keeping with the terms proposed by Japan.

According to the Russian Vice-Premier, 200 million dollars should be invested in four projects in European Russia. One is a project for the modernisation of the Moscow car manufacturing facility. The project requires more outlays, about 260 million dollars, but Russia is prepared to discuss the possibility of making cuts.

The new proposals are expected to be in the focus of the first meeting of the Russo-Japanese inter-governmental commission on trade and economic cooperation which is due to open in Moscow on March 20.

The decision to establish the commission was made during Oleg Soskovets' visit to Japan in November 1994.

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Political Issues

Russia: Yeltsin Statement Rejects Duma Decision on USSR

LD1603132096 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 1205 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Moscow, 16 Mar (Itar-Tass) — The press service of the President of the Russian Federation today issued the following statement by Boris Yeltsin:

"On 15 March 1996 the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation adopted a resolution 'On deepening the integration of the peoples who were united in the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the revocation of the Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR of 12 December 1991'". The essence of the adopted document is to cast doubts on the Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR 'On Denouncing the Treaty on the Creation of the USSR'. The legal invalidity of the resolution adopted by the Duma and its direct contravention of the Constitution of the Russian Federation is obvious."

Whatever the motive behind the resolution, its initiators were not hampered by thoughts of the consequences that it could have for Russia and the CIS.

This State Duma resolution, like the resolution "On the legal validity of the USSR referendum of 17 March 1991 on preserving the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," is effectively aimed at creating a situation of political and legal stalemate in Russia.

The agreement on the creation of the CIS (including the protocol of 21 December 1991) stated that the USSR ceased its existence as an entity in international law and as a geopolitical reality. The resolutions adopted by the State Duma are not capable of resurrecting the Soviet Union and can only give rise to uncertainty regarding the Russian Federation's legal position.

Moreover, their adoption can be seen as an attempt by the Duma to do away with our statehood. They cast doubt on the legitimacy of state bodies, including the current State Duma, and on the possibility of holding presidential elections.

If one proceeds from the documents adopted, the Russian state would lose its legal continuity. There is a long list of other possible consequences: the destruction of international and regional security mechanisms; the threat of uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons; an increase in international terrorism and regional conflicts.

Under the cover of a crafty thesis about deepening the integration of the peoples of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Duma decisions actually result in exactly the opposite: they put obstacles in the way of real integration; they resuscite extremist nationalist forces in the CIS countries and the Baltic countries; they sharply worsen our compatriots' position in these countries.

Such actions cannot be described other than as a betrayal of Russia's interests.

For my part I assure the citizens of Russia that my position remains unchanged. I resolutely support all proposals for deepening integration among the peoples and states which used to comprise the USSR. But I reject politically explosive and juridically unsound unilateral decisions.

Integration is a voluntary matter. It is something which should be implemented with maximum respect for the partners involved, without pressure from any side, and without unnecessary fuss and declarations. That is the only way to create a firm and lasting foundation for the uniting of free states.

For over a year now work has been going on within the framework of the CIS to create a unified space embracing the economic and social spheres as well as those of technology, science and education, and culture and information.

I guarantee to the citizens of Russia, to the peoples of the Commonwealth of Independent States and to the world community:

The Russian Federation retains its status and adheres to all treaties concluded by it.

Integration within the framework of the Commonwealth will continue. As early as March breakthrough decisions may be expected in this area.

As guarantor of the Constitution I shall not permit any attempts to undermine the foundations of Russian statehood or to destabilize the situation in the country.

Russia: Yeltsin Scorns Duma Decision on USSR; Offers Confederation

LD1503190296 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Novosti" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] The president's reaction to the Duma's decision to revoke the December 1991 RSFSR Supreme Soviet decision abrogating the 1922 treaty on the formation of the USSR followed immediately. The initiators of this decision could hardly have expected anything else, especially as only yesterday Boris

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Yeltsin had warned that if the State Duma abrogated the Belovezh Agreements, he will adopt extreme measures. Today, answering questions from journalists, the president said:

[Begin Yeltsin recording, speaking to journalists] This decision is quite simply incomprehensible to me. This decision can only be adopted by a body that is in no way thinking about Russia and the Russian people, and is not thinking of the consequences of it or of the realities of implementing it. They believe that, because they have adopted a resolution, the Soviet Union will come into being again tomorrow. They think Ukraine will rejoin the Soviet Union with red flags flying, that all of them will rejoin it. That is the way they are thinking.

This being the case, one can ask them the following question. Although you have adopted such a decision, nobody will come on in and nobody intends to join this union. This being the case, who and what is Russia now? You have restored the Soviet Union. But it no longer exists in practice. So, what then is Russia? What then is the State Duma? It is a nonexistent body, because Russia is a nonexistent state, so to speak — because there is no such Soviet Union.

Where, in fact, has this resolution materialized from? It has absolutely no juridical or legal basis, since you are cutting off the very branch on which you were sitting — and are sitting. You have cut it off. You have restored the Soviet Union, but it no longer exists. They want to wreck the presidential election. That is their position. That is what they want to achieve by their resolution, because they will not achieve anything else. Nothing else will be achieved.

Only yesterday I asked what this resolution amounted to. There is a head of state who is responsible for domestic and foreign policy. That is the president, and the president will not allow such irresponsible resolutions to have political force, to be some kind of basis for action. My only reaction to this is quite simply indignation.

As for integration, we will — as I said yesterday — promote it steadily, without haste, gradually, when every state is ready for it, when the legislative basis is ready. We will gradually go over to profound integration and then, perhaps, to the establishment of a single confederation. That is a possibility — I do not rule out that possibility. [end recording]

Russia: Yeltsin, Federation Council Chairman Discuss Duma Decision

LD1803121496 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 1129 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Andrey Shtorkh]

[FBIS Translated Text] Moscow, 18 March (ITAR-TASS) — Today, Russian President Boris Yeltsin discussed the State Duma decision on Friday [15 March] relating to the annulment of the Belovezh Pushcha agreements with Yegor Stroyev, chairman of the Federation Council. An official representative of the Russian head of state's press service told the ITAR-TASS correspondent that the president and speaker "noted the negative consequences of decisions adopted by the State Duma" and also drew attention to the breaching of the Federation Council's constitutional powers that resulted from the decisions adopted by the State Duma. Boris Yeltsin and Yegor Stroyev examined the possibility of discussing these decisions at the next sitting of the Federation Council.

According to the same source, the Russian president also met the Mayor of Moscow, Yuriy Luzhkov, today. During a conversation with him, problems of the socio-economic development of the capital and the course of construction and reconstruction of public amenities and housing were examined. The issues of ensuring public order in Moscow and preparations for the G-8 [as received] meeting on problems of nuclear safety were also discussed.

Russia: Chernomyrdin Views Duma Decision on Belovezhskaya Accords

LD1703213396 Moscow Radio Rossii Network in Russian 1000 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an interview with the leading Russian media on 16 March, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin commented on the State Duma's decision to revoke the Belovezh agreements.

[Begin Chernomyrdin recording] As for this decision yesterday, I can say outright and honestly that I somehow did not even take it seriously, to begin with. What is behind it? Lack of understanding, lack of respect, or such an ignorance of one's country trlthat it is both painful and offensive. They went into it head on and now there will be reactions. Who needs it and why? Does Ukraine no longer have to be consulted? This is such a disrespectful attitude to what we now call our neighbors and our people. What if such a decision is taken about us tomorrow, I mean about Russia? I do understand that it is not just casual passers-by — these are people who want to get back in power. If one is to take a

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serious approach to this, the whole affair shows us who is who. And what will this be followed by tomorrow? In power? They will go back to annexing everything. Only how? Surely not by conquest? Surely they will not want this? They could. Here they show their true colors, for they are in such a hurry, they cannot even wait till the elections. Or else one can say that it may be they are afraid and do not want to take part in the elections, or maybe the elections themselves are not needed?

I had a meeting with Gennadiy Nikolayevich [Seleznev, Duma speaker]. I asked him: How many draft laws have you got in the State Duma? He said there were about 500. How many are you planning to discuss this year? I think, 120-130. But where are the laws? Look, the Duma is working, but there are no laws. They are fighting battles on various matters. Is this the order of the day?

I do not know what they were motivated and guided by. On the whole, they are serious people working on policies, projects, and programs now. Just look, how much they talk about social matters, how they are going to improve things, what they are going to do! But this is all just words so far. Nobody has come and said: I know how to do it. Nothing of the kind! They are waiting until somebody else comes to power and will begin work. These people will not do anything. They are not capable of doing anything. They are yesterday's men. We have been there already. We have already lived through that period. All this phrase-mongering, which the media carry today, will not lead to anything positive.

They say they are for the people, but we are all for the people. What should the poor people do?

But what was behind all this? What was the big idea? We cannot say they do not understand. They have lawyers, they have former leaders of the Soviet Union. They must have had their own goals. Let everyone know about it now in our country and beyond its borders.

Yes, we do feel sorry for ourselves now. Some of those who contributed to the disintegration of the Soviet Union are in the Duma today. Yes, I do regret the Soviet Union; it was a great state. But we treated that state without respect. We did not treat our people with respect. Why don't we remember this now?

Yes, life is difficult today. But is it the result of five years only? We were in rags for 70 years. We could not buy anything else for 70 years. And we had other problems and difficulties. Is it all forgotten now? People are not to blame that the revolution took place. The people are not to blame for the civil war, for the Great Fatherland war. All this the people had to bear, while it was the politicians who were ultimately responsible. We built communism for 70 years. The people are not to blame. We have been chasing the phantom for 70 years. Only we, for no particular reason. We were the only such enlightened people in the world. Of course, after the war we got some other reserves.

They are still trying to avoid us. The people are not to blame. The people were doing their best; they were working. Where else, in what country would you find such people who worked and lived in such conditions? Only in Russia. The same applied to the Soviet Union. We lived behind the Iron Curtain and we did everything ourselves. Could the Second World War happen? One must think it over. History is yet to judge. The concept of people's heroism just does not apply here.

Yes, today — when the system is changing without bloodshed — there are pluses, but not everything has been done properly, and we do need criticism and questions.

I cannot say today that the government led by Chernomyrdin has done everything. Far from everything, far from everything. On the other hand, not a lot of time has passed. Therefore, we want to do everything to cover this course as soon as possible, to make the life of our people easier as soon as possible, so the people can work and know what they work for, so they feel protected by the state. This is indeed why we are doing all this.

Why are people living so well abroad? Why do we envy them? Is there anything there to be envious of? They did not build communism. They burdened us with it. The specter came from there. They sent it to us and made us chase it for 70 years. We have chased it, but they have washed their hands and enjoyed the good life.

Jokes apart, I can repeat: What we are doing now is a one-off thing. We will overcome these difficulties. I am confident. Our people, the people who can work, should live well. [end recording]

Russia: Zyuganov: Duma Decision Restores 'Historical Truth'

LD1503182296 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Report by correspondent Vadim Glusker, with recorded remarks by Communist Party of the Russian Federation Chairman Gennadiy Zyuganov, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and Russia Is Our Home leader Sergey Belyayev; from the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Glusker] Two hundred and fifty in favor and 94 against, no abstentions — these are the results of the voting in the State Duma on the question of denouncing the Belovezhskaya agreement. [passage omitted]

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Gennadiy Zyuganov laconically assessed the results of today's voting.

[Zyuganov] From the judicial point of view, that is simply the restoration of the historical truth.

[Glusker] The behavior of the LDPR [Liberal Democratic Party of Russia] leader today is surprising in this story. Yesterday, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy did not rule out the possibility of working in the same harness with Russia Is Our Home with a view to supporting President [Boris] Yeltsin in the future elections. However, today he went openly over to the side of the communists. To all appearances, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy grasped the changes in the political situation in one day. Appearing with handcuffs on the rostrum, he promised that he would personally put them on deputies [Gennadiy] Burbulis, [Andrey] Kozyrev, and [Sergey] Shakhray, who took part in preparing the Belovezhskaya Agreement.

[Zhirinovskiy from rostrum, waving handcuffs] When these friends met there in the village of (?Viskuli), Belovezhskaya Pushcha, the place where the meeting itself was held speaks of dark intentions — they assembled at night, in the forest.

[Glusker] Russia Is Our Home and Yabloko came out against today's decision. In the opinion of Sergey Belyayev, the result of the voting contradicts constitutional logic. Only the relevant law approved by the Duma, the Federation Council, and the president can revoke the 1991 agreement. There is no such law. Moreover, the idea of reconstituting Soviet characteristics in individual countries, which proceeds from today's decision, will hardly be continued in fraternal republics.

[Sergey Belyayev] Not a single country of the CIS will allow itself the luxury of eliminating its own state. Nor will they allow the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the Security Council, and also debtors and creditors to laugh in their face.

[Glusker] So today's document does not have any legal force. [passage omitted]

Russia: Zhirinovskiy: Transcaucasus Not Wanted in New State

LD1503235896

[FBIS Report] Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian at 1940 GMT on 15 March carries the 15-minute "Vzglyad" program hosted by Aleksandr Lyubimov. The program is on the Russian State Duma's decision on the Belovezhskaya agreements, which set up the CIS. Lyubimov chaired a panel discussion in which the speakers were Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR); Roman Popkovich, deputy leader of the Russia Is Our Home group in the Duma; and Viktor Sheynis, chairman of the Yabloko group in the Duma.

Opening the program, Lyubimov explains: "Unfortunately, the heroes of the day, the Communists, are not taking part in our program. Evidently, they did not expect such a strong reaction. If you watched "Vremya," you will have seen what the presidents of many CIS countries had to say."

Lyubimov then asks Zhirinovskiy for his assessment of what happened today. Zhirinovskiy says:

"We supported the resolution to demonstrate how wrong various evaluations of those decisions have been. People say that the USSR would have collapsed anyway even without the Belovezhskaya agreements. It would not have collapsed. Even if some people do not like the actions, the steps which were taken today, they could have positive consequences, as they could have done then.

"The reaction of certain new Asiatic states shows yet again that they have not understood everything properly. When today Levon Ter-Petrosyan [Armenian president] says he does not like what has happened, he has not understood that we are not, in any case, inviting Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Georgia to be part of the new state. All we are saying is that in due course some kind of new state should be created. This would be formed on the territory which lies within the borders of the former USSR, or part of it.

"But there is no need for the Transcaucasus republics to worry. I, our group, will categorically oppose any form of union with the Transcaucasus republics, and certain Central Asian ones too, and with certain parts of Ukraine. So, there is no need for [Ukrainian President] Kuchma in Kiev to get upset. We are only talking about those areas of Ukraine where the population may vote in a referendum for reunification with Russia, as [words indistinct]."

Later in the program Zhirinovskiy adds:

"We voted for the motion, but not for the restoration of the USSR. This was a protest against the destruction of the Russian Empire as a whole. It was our group which, one year ago, tabled a bill recognizing the October revolution as illegal. We must begin there. The October revolution was illegal. The establishment of the USSR in 1922 was illegal, and so was its destruction. We must understand all that correctly. We have never supported Communist ideology. But what did we see today? I now understand why the CPRF [Communist Party of the Russian Federation] did what it did in 1991. Today the leader of that party says that 'we did not understand everything properly then.' But how could it have been

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a ruling party when, a few months later, it turned into a party which voted for the destruction of the very state which that selfsame party created. The fact that they were too scared to take part in this program today is quite telling, isn't it.

"In Kiev two weeks ago he [Gennadiy Zyuganov] assured them [the Ukrainians] that Ukraine's independence is guaranteed. You have nothing to worry about if we come to power. Two weeks later they are breaking up this structure, this set-up [the CIS]. So, we are glad to see that positions are being illuminated. Today we see that the policy which was pursued in 1991 is still continuing today. So, this was not a victory for the Communists or the LDPR, and there is nothing frightening about it. This was just a little skirmish to see who stands for what."

Referring to the CIS, Zhirinovskiy says:

"This is the root of today's problem. I spoke about the Communists' position. We saw what they had to say. They explain their action by saying that they did not understand what was happening at that time, but look at what is happening today. I am outraged by the CIS, by our economic relationship with it. We have no objection to the CIS. Let it exist. But why are we feeding them again? Why are we once again writing off billions of dollars of their debt? Why have we written off the Belarusian debt with this zero option.

"Kuchma now says they are an independent state. For heaven's sake, be one. Do you really think we want to eliminate their independence? No. So, let them support themselves. Why are we once again feeding and watering the whole of this CIS? That is why we, the LDPR group, voted for the motion today. Stop feeding the CIS. We will never vote for... [pauses] We do not need either the USSR or the CIS. That is our group's position. We want to develop our Russian state. [passage indistinct] That can be studied later, from various angles, but how long are we going to carry on feeding the CIS? That is the problem."

Russia: Chernomyrdin on Economy, Land Ownership, Duma Decision

LD1603221496 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1937 GMT 16 Mar 96

[Interview with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin by "Vremya" correspondent Natalya Chernyshova; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Natalya Chernyshova] Viktor Stepanovich [Chernomyrdin], first of all, thank you for agreeing to give an interview to our channel. The state has recently made a number of sweeping statements — on wages, for example. A layman may have two questions. To be more accurate, a layman may have the impression that the government has always been sitting on money bags and hiding them. On the other hand, those who are slightly in the know about the financial situation in the country are aware that this can affect the budget. Where are the financial sources?

[Chernomyrdin] We the government must organize the work and ensure that taxes are being paid and collected. Naturally, immediately after that the money should go to the budget and be distributed to the budget articles, including the article on wages, first of all. This is the main source. And we do not need to invent something or look for something.

[Chernyshova] But you yourself are always emphasizing at every government meeting that the budget must be tough and that there is no money. However, today you are throwing a huge sum of money [on the market] all at once.

[Chernomyrdin] Nothing can be further from the truth. We are throwing nothing. I repeat once again and I say with full responsibility that we are acting within the budget law. With this in view, in the first quarter the president decided to slow down the financing of some budget articles and to hold them up to get rid of the arrears and pay off the debts. This is the first point. I am talking only about the framework of law. I am not talking about breaking the law, or, moreover, printing uncovered paper money. We are not doing this and we must not do this. We will not do this. This is out of the question. So, this is the first point. The second point is that we are increasing the collection of taxes. This is very important. We are also involving part of our resources and credits to start working on schedule, as it were. That is, we must get rid of our arrears in the first quarter, in March, to pay off wages and start working on a normal schedule in April.

The president decided to extend an interest-free loan to the regions, above all, to assist them and their regional budgets. Well, a timetable has now been put together and it will be kept to until the end of March.

Substantial financial resources have now been brought into play to have this problem eliminated. I am convinced we will eliminate it. However, everyone must understand that a great deal of serious work is involved here. Let me yet again turn to all those people who are in charge, at all levels — March will be followed by April, May, June, and July — and all levels must work precisely and systematically. I want to say yet again that control bodies are now working, along with the procuracy and others, as well as ministries and departments,

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each in their own area and checks are naturally being made.

Regrettably, there are errors, some of them serious and those in charge will be made accountable for that.

[Chernyshova] When such large sums of money are made available all at once by way of wages — I mean people are getting the money — this cannot but have its effect on the growth of prices. What state controls are going to be in place?

[Chernomyrdin] This is, of course, a serious question and it is not for nothing that I made the proviso that we are acting within the framework of the law on the budget for 1996. We are not going beyond this framework. All this is provided for in the budget. If 60 percent are collected, this means that 40 percent forms the reserve that is not put to any use at all.

[Chernyshova] You are talking about taxes?

[Chernomyrdin] Of course. If we fail to collect this money, this means that either we failed to generate the output or we failed to market it, or else it is moving elsewhere, through other channels. So, we are not going beyond any frameworks here. This can be monitored. Inflation will react immediately and it will again be people, of course, who will suffer, the poor first and foremost, since immediately there will be such an increase, even the wages about to be paid out will not be sufficient to make ends meet.

[Chernyshova] How much do people paid from the budget account for now, 10 percent of all wage payments. What is the budget, the federal budget?

[Chernomyrdin] You mean overall? A bit more than 10 percent, between 10 and 12 percent.

[Chernyshova] What I am getting at is this. Let us say the state does pay now its debts to budget-financed organizations, both federal and regional ones. However, what about the wages paid out at joint-stock enterprises, where the situation is identical?

[Chernomyrdin] Everyone must pay according to the law, everyone must do so. If they do not pay, they will answer before the law. I am duty bound to tell you that if we take the present situation, then, essentially, it is, for the time being, the state that is the majority shareholder in numerous joint-stock companies.

This is another issue and when I deal with this issue at government sittings, I have this aspect in mind first and foremost. Some people have started to forget who owns majority shares and who is who or what is what, calling for shareholders' meetings and adopting decisions. Incidentally, I raised this during the government's latest sitting. No one is permitted to do this; the law is binding on everyone.

[Chernyshova] Thank you. I would now like to deal with the questions on the president's strong decision on land. It was, of course, a strong decision. Literally the day before I was filming at the farmers' congress, which ended with their appeal to the president to the effect that if the Duma fails to adopt the land code, they hope the president will adopt a decree and help them. How will it be implemented in practice? Will it not soon be the case that land will end up in the hands of speculators? You know, it is, after all, difficult to explain to some old granny her rights, her opportunities and, the main thing, the prospect of being the owner of her own allotment. Many people will be found willing to make money out of this.

[Chernomyrdin] I would not like to blame anyone; although, the land code lay in the old parliament for three years, went through one reading, and that is when matters came to rest. Even that version was a greatly expurgated one when compared to what was initially suggested. Now already the second State Duma is working and again the land code has not yet been tackled.

It is simply that the president's decree became overdue, of course. Suffice it to say that the country already has more than 40 million people who use land. This is in the first place, but we should have said, to begin with, that the right of citizens to own land is now enshrined in the Constitution. We, none of us are complying with the Constitution. That is a paradox. We are again looking for everything, now we need this cod or the second code. Initially, they said there is no civil code, so we adopted a civil code. Then they said — what about a land code? Yes, a land code is needed. We submitted it. The criticism levelled at the government is all correct, but the land code was submitted and for three years it has been lying there and it has not been adopted. The president's patience snapped and finally he issued this decree.

When the land code is adopted, the decree on land just signed by Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] will lose its validity.

You said there would be abuses. This is exactly how some people are trying to gain some political capital. Look at what they are saying: It is a question of arable lands, of agricultural estates, which are going to be carved up! This is not the case. There are 12 million farmers among the 40 million.

I would rather think about our farmers today and not about city-dwellers, for it is not the city dwellers

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who currently determine things in agriculture or are instrumental where the main question in the country is concerned. No, it is people living in the countryside, it is the agro-industrial complex. But people involved in agriculture have no rights. First of all, it is necessary to make sure that everyone can feel himself the master of his plot. Look how many pensioners are there in the countryside. What are they being punished for? They live on land, but they have no land. They have their plots; this must be enshrined in law. Everyone should have relevant documents, everyone should have the right to lend the land or to give it away to his grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

I am approaching the main question: Will there be buying up or reselling of land? Yes, there will be. There will be. That is why we did it. Yes, there will be, but land will be resold under such conditions that the land will be used as it should be used. It will be sold to .. [pasues] This is one of the main articles of the land code and the decree. The land will be used. If land is not being used properly, it will be expropriated. And that is that. There is no tragedy here.

[Chernyshova] Who will control this?

[Chernomyrdin] The authorities. Those who will sell land. Taking this opportunity, I must say that the land is the dearest thing to us Russians. We have plenty of land, but conditions are not easy in Russia. And we must make sure that the land is used properly. The land must be used properly. The land does not forgive lack of respect. Inheriting, lending or selling — the land must belong to those and only those who will work on it.

[Chernyshova] Will town dwellers be able to buy this land or will it only be sold to those living in the countryside?

[Chernomyrdin] Why, of course they will be able to, if town dwellers work on this land. Why should they not be able to? Incidentally, town dwellers work well and not so badly.

[Chernyshova] Do you imagine now there will be a big carve-up of land?

[Chernomyrdin] There will be no carve-up of land. Why should there be one?

[Chernyshova] Well, what about land owned collectively? We have collective allotments. I can now sell my share. How will it be sold? Surely this amounts to a carve-up of the arable land.

[Chernomyrdin] Well, how did we tackle privatization? We began with the first stage of privatization. We reached the second stage. You will recall that when we started our privatization, people said it would be the beginning of the end and that others would arrive and buy up everything and, first and foremost, foreigners would arrive to buy things up. And so it is here — no one has arrived. The first stage came and went and we are now reaching the end of our second stage. There are still many stages of privatization ahead of us. There should be no haste nor will there be. We have sensible people; there will be no haste.

[Chernyshova] Viktor Stepanovich, as a journalist I cannot but ask you a question about yesterday's decision by the Duma. To be honest, I do not know how to put it to you, because I do not, in principle, know of a single person living in Russia or anywhere else in the CIS who would be against the Soviet Union. Everyone is sad about the Soviet Union's disintegration. I cannot imagine a single CIS state able to return back to the fold; the train has departed, as it were.

[Chernomyrdin] You know, you are right. Everyone is indeed saying that it is a pity; it was a single state, a powerful state. Moreover, we all used to work together and knew each other. However, no one is currently saying that everyone wants to be back again in precisely such a union. As for this decision yesterday, I can say outright and honestly that I somehow did not even take it seriously, to begin with. One is now beginning to understand what is behind it — lack of understanding, lack of respect, or such an ignorance of one's country and of what is taking place around us and of what has generally taken place. What if such a decision is made about us tomorrow, I mean about Russia and its people? Matters would reach the boiling point, you know, and people would ask what have we here? I do understand that it is not just casual passers-by or some sort of jokes that are involved here — these are people who want to get back in power. If one is to take a serious approach to this, the whole affair shows us who is who. And what will this be followed by tomorrow? In power? They will go back to annexing everything. Only how? Surely not by conquest? Surely they will not want this? They could. Here they show their true colors, for they are in such a hurry, they cannot even wait till the elections. Or else one can say it may be they are afraid and do not want to take part in the elections, or maybe the elections themselves are not needed?

I had a meeting with Gennadiy Nikolayevich [Seleznev, Duma speaker]. I asked him: How many draft laws have you got in the State Duma? He said there were more than 400, about 500. How many are you planning to discuss this year? I think, 120-130. But where are the laws? Look, the Duma is working, but there are no laws. They are fighting battles on various matters. Is this the order of the day? One stands up and says: We are for the people, and the second one says the same, too. What

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should the poor people do? I cannot say today that the government led by Chernomyrdin has done everything. Far from everything, far from everything. On the other hand, not a lot of time has passed. Therefore, we want to do everything to cover this way as soon as possible, to make the life of our people easier, so the people can work and know what they work for, so they feel protected by the state. I can say once again — this is very serious indeed what we are doing. We must do it once. We can overcome those difficulties once. I am confident that we will overcome them; we will overcome.

Russia: ITAR-TASS, INTERFAX Report on Filatov News Conference 13 Mar

LD1703222996

[FBIS Report] Both ITAR-TASS and INTERFAX carry reports on a news conference by Sergey Filatov, chairman of the coordinating committee of the All-Russian Movement of Public Support for Boris Yeltsin, in Moscow on 13 March. Filatov says the movement will hold their first congress on 6 April, and comments on consultations with democratic movements.

In a report by Lyudmila Aleksandrova, Moscow ITAR-TASS in English at 1638 GMT on 13 March says: "Russian President Boris Yeltsin's supporters seeking his reelection for a second term will hold their first congress on April 6, Sergey Filatov, who heads their movement, said.

"Speaking at a press conference in Moscow on Wednesday, Filatov noted that the movement has admitted 16 new members lately, thus bringing the number of its collective members to 256, and has set up branches in 89 Russian regions.

"He said initiative groups have collected over eight million signatures in Yeltsin's support. Some of them have collected the required one million signatures and will decide which of them will submit them to the Central Electoral Commission next week.

"Filatov noted that the movement is continuing consultations with Russia's Democratic Choice of Yegor Gaydar. 'He has got his own problems, but I think we will meet on the way,' he added.

"Asked about Grigoriy Yavlinskiy's Yabloko, Filatov said he is conducting no consultations with them. 'We need to make a pause,' he said, adding that many political leaders have not made up their mind yet."

Moscow INTERFAX in English at 1601 GMT on 13 March carries two reports on Filatov. One report adds: "An all-Russia movement in support of Boris Yeltsin's candidacy at the upcoming presidential elections will hold a congress in Moscow on April 6.

"Yeltsin is expected to speak at the congress to set out his election platform, movement chief coordinator Sergey Filatov told a news conference in Moscow Wednesday after a session of the movement's coordination committee."

The second INTERFAX report adds: "Over 8 million people have signed in support of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's reelection bid, Yeltsin campaign coordinator Sergey Filatov told Interfax Wednesday.

"Ten voter initiative groups collected the signatures, five of them receiving more than a million each, he said, adding that the signature drive would go on.

"The signatures will be delivered to the Central Electoral Commission in the second half of March, but as only 1 million signatures are necessary and initiative groups are not allowed to combine their signatures, they will have to decide whose signatures to use, Filatov said."

In a later report, INTERFAX reports on Filatov's comments on talks with democratic movements. Moscow INTERFAX in English at 1945 GMT on 13 March reports: "The purpose of the national movement in support of Boris Yeltsin in the June 1996 presidential election is to consolidate fragmented liberal parties and movements on the platform of further reforms and stability, the chairman of the movement's coordinating committee Sergey Filatov told a news conference on Wednesday.

"Filatov said that he had had consultations with the Democratic Choice of Russia's leader Yegor Gaydar and that 'for the time being Yegor Timurovich has his own problems he is trying to cope with. I hope we shall join somewhere down the road.'

"Filatov said he was having no consultations with the leader of the Yabloko movement Grigoriy Yavlinskiy. He believes that Yavlinskiy has not made up his mind yet. At the same time Filatov said that the time for making final decisions had not come yet and there would be contacts with Yavlinskiy before June 16.

"Filatov said that the movement in Yeltsin's support hoped it would increase the incumbent's electorate by recruiting those voters who were still undecided. Filatov hopes the share of such voters is rather big, about 40 percent.

"Those who plan to vote Communist are unlikely to be talked out of doing so, he remarked.

"Filatov said he trusted opinion polls held by the National Public Opinion Studies Center. Those polls indicated the situation was changing for the better.

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"Filatov said that the movement had its offices in all the 89 member-entities of Russia and included 256 institutional backers."

Russia: Zyuganov Presents Election Platform in Moscow

LD1703144596 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1403 GMT 17 Mar 96

[By Lyudmila Aleksandrova]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW March 17 (Itar-Tass) — Gennadiy Zyuganov, presidential candidate from a bloc of national-patriotic forces, met voters at the Parliamentary Centre of the Russian Federation here on Sunday, setting out his election programme.

In the presidium of the meeting, together with the Communist Party leader were, in particular, Nikolay Ryzhkov, leader of the Power to the People movement, Svetlana Goryacheva, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, Aman Tuleyev, Chairman of the Kemerovo Regional Legislative Assembly, and Aleksandr Rutskoy, leader of the Derzhava national-patriotic movement.

A programme set out by the presidential candidate, who is known to have been the first to be registered as such, contained a large array of most diverse promises. Zyuganov promised, in particular, in the event of his win in the presidential elections to "guarantee the right of all citizens to work, rest, housing and free education", "to bring wages, salaries, pensions and student grants into line with real subsistence minimum", "to make up for savings lost by the depositors as a result of the so-called reforms", as well as to contribute to family, mother and child welfare and secure a radical change in the position of women in society.

Zyuganov stated an intention to uphold the interests of the home producer at enterprises of all forms of ownership and take urgent measures and apply a State regulation of the economy where necessary.

The programme allows "all forms of land management" but specifies the absence of the right to a free purchase or sale of land, with the exception of small holdings and orchard-and-garden land plots.

The presidential candidate promised to save the country's scientific, technical and cultural potential and give State support to hi-tech plants in the defence sector and preserve public education, culture and art.

Zyuganov's programme contains a promise to strengthen the financial system, ensure the stability of the rouble, establish State monopoly on foreign trade in natural resources and strategic commodities. He recognises the multi-structural character of the economy, with the State retaining the management of strategically important sectors. The candidate promises "to make all citizens real co-owners of public property in practice".

Zyuganov promised to bring about an end to the war in Chechnya and prevent new military conflicts in Russia. He sought to allay the fears of those who anticipate that the Communists, if they win the elections, would do away with the political opposition. "There will be no persecutions from political motives. We are firmly against repressions," he stated, adding that he would offer a broad compromise to all political forces, considering that there is nothing more precious than the interests of the Motherland and peace.

Having emphasised that he favours a dissolution of the CIS-establishing agreements, Zyuganov specified that this does not mean that "tomorrow someone will forcibly annex anyone's territory or encroach on anyone's sovereignty," he said.

All necessary measures would be taken for a voluntary restoration of all contacts between Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Foreign policy would be an active one. "We shall not stop short of terminating inequitable treaties which infringe upon the interests of the Motherland," Zyuganov stated.

The presidential candidate promised to take measures to fight corruption in the State apparatus and assured that "moral criteria would reign supreme in politics" and that all political forces would get access to mass media.

Another presidential candidate, Aman Tuleyev, addressing those present at the meeting said the collection of signatures in support of his candidacy would be continued. He promised, however, to do everything so that "all votes combine at the right moment" to enable Zyuganov to win in the very first round of the forthcoming presidential elections.

Aleksandr Rutskoy on Sunday announced his support for the candidacy of Zyuganov as a single candidate from the national-patriotic forces. He stated that, notwithstanding all differences between him and Zyuganov and his programme, he decided to support him on the polling day. The people have given preference to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and one must reckon with the opinion of the people, Rutskoy pointed out, urging all politicians "to muster courage and place the interests of the people above one's own ego".

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Russia: State To Allot R4 Billion to Presidential Candidates

LD1503191196 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1629 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Mar 15 (Interfax) — Not more than 4 billion rubles [R] (about $820,000) will be allotted by the state for the election campaign of all the presidential candidates, Russian Central Electoral Commission Chairman Nikolay Ryabov told Interfax Friday.

He said the sum will be equally divided between all the officially registered candidates. Ryabov recalled that the commission had already provided 150 million rubles (about $31,000) to the Communist Party leader, Gennadiy Zyuganov.

"This is not the final sum," said Ryabov. According to him, the sum will be specified after all the candidates are registered.

In Ryabov's estimates, not more than 10 candidates will be able to collect the one million signatures required for registration.

Commenting on the results of a two-day conference of heads of regional electoral commissions which ended Friday, he said "the commissions are ready for the presidential elections."

At the same time he pointed out the need to resolve certain problems, including to raise what he called "the extremely low" salary of election commission personnel.

Russia: Text of Yeltsin Edict on Foreign Ministry

MM1803105696 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA in Russian 16 Mar 96 p 4

[Russian Federation Presidential Edict No. 375 "On the Coordinating Role of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Implementing the Unified Foreign Policy Line of the Russian Federation" signed by Russian Federation President B. Yeltsin on 12 March 1996]

[FBIS Translated Text] With a view to intensifying the coordinating role of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs in implementing the unified foreign policy line of the Russian Federation I decree:

1. In implementing the foreign policy course the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to promote coordinated interaction among organs of executive power and organs of legislative and judicial power so that the participation these organs and their officials in international activity ensures the principle of the unity of foreign policy and the fulfillment of the Russian Federation's international commitments.

It is to be laid down that in the system of federal organs of executive power the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the leading organ in the field of relations with foreign states and international organizations and effects overall monitoring of the fulillment of the Russian Federation's international commitments. The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the activity of other federal organs of executive power in this field and the international ties of Russian Federation components.

Federal organs of executive power and Federation component organs of executive power are to inform the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the prescribed procedure of the implementation of international activity and international ties, official visits, consultations, talks, and documents and other accords signed.

2. It is mandatory for federal organs of executive power to agree proposals affecting the foreign policy interests of Russia, including proposals for the conducting of talks and conclusion of Russian Federation international treaties, with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to their submission to the Russian Federation president and the Russian Federation Government respectively.

The Russian Federation Presidential Staff and the Russian Federation Government are not to accept such proposals for examination unless they have been agreed with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Draft agreements between Russian Federation components and components or administrative-territorial formations of foreign states (including draft agreements on the opening of missions) are subject to agreement with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Federal organs of executive power are to make provision for the inclusion of Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives in the membership of interdepartmental commissions, working groups, and other bodies linked with the implementation of international activity.

3. Russian Federation extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassadors in foreign states are to ensure the implementation of the unified foreign policy line of the Russian Federation in the states where they are posted and to this end to coordinate the activity and monitor the work of other Russian Federation missions located in the state of posting, including trade missions, missions of federal organs of executive power, Russian state institutions, organizations and enterprises, and their delegations and groups of experts and also missions of components of

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the Russian Federation opened in accordance with the prescribed procedure on the territory of individual components or administrative-territorial formations.

The leaders of the said missions, delegations, and groups of experts are obliged, in accordance with the prescribed procedure, to agree their activity with the ambassador, assist the ambassador in exercising his powers, and inform the ambassador of their activity.

The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to submit within two weeks proposals on questions linked with the organization and procedure for representing abroad the interests of federal organs of executive power and Russian state institutions.

Russian Federation diplomatic missions are to be informed through the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs of official delegations being sent to the countries in question.

4. It is to be laid down that official statements and initiatives on questions of the state's foreign policy are made by the Russian Federation president, the chairman of the Russian Federation Government, and the Russian Federation minister of foreign affairs, and — on their corresponding instructions — other officials. Representatives of federal organs of executive power can make statements relating to individual foreign policy questions only in accordance with positions which have been approved in accordance with the prescribed procedure and have been agreed with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Official information of a foreign policy nature is promulgated by the press secretaries of the Russian Federation president and the Russian Federation Government chairman, the Information and Press Department of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also Ministry spokesmen duly empowered so to do by the Russian Federation minister of foreign affairs.

5. Proposals for inviting top- and high-level delegations to the Russian Federation (heads of state and government, top officials of international organizations) are submitted correspondingly to the Russian Federation president and the Russian Federation Government by agreement with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Invitations by federal organs of executive power to members of foreign states' governments and officials of equivalent status are made by prior agreement with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

6. The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to be tasked with the preparation of draft responses to official messages addressed to the Russian Federation president and the chairman of the Russian Federation Government from the heads of state and government of foreign states and top officials of international organizations. Copies of such messages are sent to the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Draft messages from the Russian Federation president and the chairman of the Russian Federation Government addressed to state and political figures and organizations of foreign states and international organizations are submitted by agreement with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs unless prescribed by some other procedure for their preparation and submission.

7. The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs to report respectively to the Russian Federation president and the Russian Federation Government on the actions of organs of state power and officials resulting in the violation of the procedure prescribed by this edict.

The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to be tasked with providing official explanations on questions of coordinating activity in the implementation of the Russian Federation's foreign policy course.

8. Monitoring of the fulfillment of this edict is to be the responsibility of the Russian Presidential Staff and the Russian Federation Government.

9. This edict comes into force from the day it is signed.

Russia: Edict, Statute on Presidential Policy Administration

MM1803104296 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA in Russian 16 Mar 96 p 5

[Russian Federation Presidential Edict No. 341, signed by President Yeltsin in Moscow on 7 March 1996: "On the Ratification of the Statute on the Russian Federation President's Main Administration for Issues of the State's Domestic and Foreign Policy" accompanied by the statute on the same]

[FBIS Translated Text] 1. The appended statute on the Russian Federation President's Main Administration for Issues of the State's Domestic and Foreign Policy is hereby ratified.

2. This edict comes into force from the date it is signed.

[Signed] B. Yeltsin, Russian Federation president

[Dated] Moscow, the Kremlin, 7 March 1996
No. 341 [Edict ends]

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Statute on the Russian Federation President's Main Administration for Issues of the State's Domestic and Foreign Policy

I. General Provisions

1. The Russian Federation President's Main Administration for Issues of the State's Domestic and Foreign Policy (hereinafter, the main administration) is an autonomous subdivision of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff.

2. In its activity the main administration is guided by the Russian Federation Constitution, federal laws, Russian Federation presidential edicts and directives, Russian Federation Presidential Staff directives, and this statute.

The statute on the main administration is ratified by the Russian Federation president following representations from the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff.

II. Functions of the Main Administration

3. In its activity the main administration takes the necessary measures to create the conditions for:

— the Russian Federation president to determine the main avenues of the state's domestic and foreign policy;

— the adoption by the Russian Federation president following the procedure laid down by the Russian Federation Constitution of measures to protect the Russian Federation's sovereignty and its independence and state integrity;

— the ensuring by the Russian Federation president of the coordinated functioning and collaboration of federal organs of state power and organs of state power in Russian Federation components;

— the ensuring of cooperation between the Russian Federation president and the Russian Federation Federal Assembly chambers, the Russian Federation Government, the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court and the Russian Federation Supreme Court of Arbitration, Russian Federation component organs of state power and their apparatuses, organs of local self-government, and political parties, movements, public associations, and religious faiths;

— the ensuring of the activity of the Russian Federation president's Foreign Policy Council.

III. Tasks of the Main Administration

4. The main administration, in line with its functions, carries out the following main tasks:

— collecting and processing information received from Russian Federation regions, preparing information analysis reviews and reports on the sociopolitical and socioeconomic situation in those regions, and submitting them for examination by the Russian Federation president;

— collaborating with the Russian Federation Government and federal executive organs;

— ensuring coordinated activity by full representatives of the Russian Federation president in Russian Federation components and Russian Federation component executive organs;

— preparing proposals and recommendations for the Russian Federation president on influencing the situation in the regions;

— cooperating with committees, commissions, and apparatuses of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly chambers and representative organs of state power in Russian Federation components;

— ensuring cooperation between the Russian Federation president and organs of local self-government, public associations, and interregional economic associations;

— taking part in the selection of candidates and shaping personnel reserves for the appointment of the Russian Federation president's plenipotentiary representatives and administration heads in Russian Federation components;

— taking part in the elaboration of draft Russian Federation presidential edicts and documents needed for the Russian Federation president to resolve the issues of the appointment and dismissal of the Russian Federation president's plenipotentiary representatives and administration heads in Russian Federation components;

— notifying organs of state power in Russian Federation components and the central and regional mass media of the Russian Federation president's position on fundamental questions of regional policy;

— comprehensively analyzing the state of nationalities and regional policy, as well as interethnic relations in Russian Federation regions, and submitting proposals on their improvement for consideration by the Russian Federation president;

— taking part in the preparation of draft agreements on the demarcation of terms of reference and powers between federal organs of state power and Russian Federation component organs of state power;

— ensuring coordination between the actions of Russian Federation component organs of state power during the staging of Russia-wide and regional election campaigns and referendums;

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— preparing information for the Russian Federation president on the position of Federation Council members and the Russian Federation Federal Assembly State Duma deputies on the Russian Federation president's legislative strategy;

— collecting and generalizing proposals and initiatives from public associations, religious faiths, and the opinions of their leaders on questions of the Russian Federation president's policy and the Russian Federation Presidential Staff's activity;

— drawing up proposals for the Russian Federation president on ensuring coordinated cooperation between federal organs of state power in the sphere of the Russian Federation's foreign policy;

— studying public opinion in Russia on questions of the Russian Federation's foreign policy with a view to preparing information analysis material on these issues for the Russian Federation president;

— taking part in the preparation of draft normative acts on questions of the Russian Federation's foreign policy;

— organizing and implementing interdepartmental coordination in connection with the examination by the Russian Federation president of specific issues concerning relations with foreign countries, and the preparation of international visits by the Russian Federation president and top-level visits by foreign politicians to the Russian Federation;

— collaborating with the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry and other federal executive organs on questions of the planning of the Russian Federation president's foreign policy measures, and ensuring coordination between the plans for foreign visits by the Russian Federation president;

— organizing collaboration and cooperation between the Russian Federation Presidential Staff and presidential staffs and top executive organs in foreign countries;

— collecting and processing special information on questions of the state's financial and credit policy, forecasting the possible development of events relating to the adoption by the Russian Federation president of certain decisions in this sphere;

— preparing proposals on the shaping of the main avenues of financial and credit regulation of the state's economy under reform conditions;

— elaborating a balanced approach to the questions of defining priorities in the spending of state financial resources, as well as the potential of the federal budget and federal nonbudgetary funds for attracting monetary resources in the amounts needed to financially ensure implementation of the main avenues of the state's domestic and foreign policy as determined by the Russian Federation president;

— monitoring in conjunction with the Russian Federation Finance Ministry the targeted expenditure of funds allocated from the Russian Federation President's Reserve Fund;

— preparing proposals on draft federal laws reaching the president regulating the Russian Federation's financial and credit system;

— preparing relevant normative legal acts regulating the process of the development and improvement of state symbols and attributes of the Russian Federation and the symbols and attributes used in Russian Federation components;

— taking part in the elaboration of draft Russian Federation presidential edicts and directives on questions of the development of physical fitness, health, and sports work.

5. The main administration resolves the tasks facing it in conjunction with the Russian Federation president's aides and with autonomous subunits and state organs within the Russian Federation Presidential Staff, providing them with the necessary analytical, information, and reference material drawn up within the framework of the main administration's purview.

IV. Ensuring the Activity of the Main Administration

6. In order to implement its functions the main administration is entitled:

— to request and obtain under the established procedure the necessary material from the leaders of subunits of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff, the Federation Council apparatus, the Russian Federation Federal Assembly State Duma apparatus, the Russian Federation Government apparatus, the apparatuses of the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court, and the Russian Federation Supreme Court of Arbitration, as well as federal executive organs, organs of local self-government, institutions, organizations, and officials;

— to make use under the established procedure of the data bases of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff, federal executive organs, and Russian Federation component organs;

— to make use of state, including government, communications systems;

— to recruit academics and specialists to carry out special work on a contract basis;

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— to cooperate with the Federation Council apparatus, the Russian Federation Federal Assembly State Duma apparatus, the Russian Federation Government apparatus, the apparatuses of the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court of Arbitration, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the Russian Federation Comptroller's Office, and with federal executive organs, the Russian Federation General Prosecutor's Office, and Russian Federation component organs of state power.

7. Information, documentation, material, technical, and transportation support for the main administration's activity, as well as the social and consumer servicing of its staffers is implemented by the Russian Federation President's Administration of Affairs and corresponding subunits of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff.

V. Leadership of the Main Administration

8. The deputy leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff-chief of the main administration (hereinafter, chief of the main administration) is appointed and dismissed by the Russian Federation president following representations from the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff.

9. The chief of the main administration is in charge of the main administration's activity.

10. The chief of the main administration has one first deputy chief plus deputy chiefs of the main administration who are chiefs of main administration administrations.

The first deputy chief of the main administration stands in for the chief of the main administration when he is temporarily absent.

11. The chief of the main administration:

— submits to the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff for ratification the structure and staffing of the main administration, as well as proposals on the allocation to the main administration of the financial resouces to pay for secondment expenses and the implementation of scientific research, planning, and expert work out of Russian Federation Presidential Staff estimates;

— submits to the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff candidates for appointment as main administration staffers;

— submits proposals to the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff on the dismissal of main administration staffers;

— submits to the leader of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff proposals on incentives for main administration staff and the taking of disciplinary measures against them;

— determines the functions of main administration subunits and ratifies the statutes and official instructions on them;

— concludes contracts under the established procedure on behalf of the Russian Federation Presidential Staff with scientific research organizations and specialists for the implementation of scientific research, planning, and expert work in line with the financial resources allocated for these purposes by Russian Federation Presidential Staff estimates;

— resolves questions of the secondment of main administration staffers within the Russian Federation;

— issues directives on questions of the main administration's work.

12. The chief of the main administration represents the main administration in relations with the Federation Council apparatus, the Russian Federation Federal Assembly State Duma apparatus, the Russian Federation Government apparatus, the apparatuses of the Russian Federation Constitutional Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court, the Russian Federation Supreme Court of Arbitration, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the Russian Federation Comptroller's Office, and federal executive organs, the Russian Federation General Prosecutor's Office, and Russian Federation component organs of state power.

13. The first deputy and deputy chiefs of the main administration-heads of main administration administrations implement certain powers of the head of the main administration in accordance with official instructions, and are entitled to sign documents issued by the main administration.

14. Heads of main administration administrations have deputies and deputies who are department heads.

VI. Responsibility of the Leaders of the Main Administration

15. The chief of the main administration is personally responsible for carrying out the tasks entrusted to the main administration, taking account of the rights granted to him by this statute.

16. The first deputy chief of the main administration, the deputy chiefs of the main administration, chiefs of main administration administrations, their deputies, and the leaders of other main administration subunits are personally responsibility for carrying out the duties

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entrusted to them taking account of the rights granted to them.

Russia: Yeltsin Decree Adds More Control Bodies to Administration

LD1703163696 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1626 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 17 (Itar-Tass) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin on Sunday added by decree two more supervising functions to his administration, the Main Control Office of the President of the Russian Federation and the Office for Co-ordinating Presidential Envoys' Activities in Russian Provinces.

The Statute of the Main Control Office, eff. [effective] March 16, said the body will be charged with — ensuring control over and checking compliance of federal and regional executive bodies, their employees, and other organisations with federal laws and presidential decrees and rulings, as well as with instructions issued by the President and the presidential Head of Staff; and — drafting recommendations, basing on earlier checks, as to ways to prevent violations and improve the performance of federal and regional executive bodies.

Russia: Government Decree on Tightening Currency Regime

MM1803121896 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA in Russian 13 Mar 96 p 5

[Russian Federation Government Decree No. 206 "On Measures To Step Up and Develop Currency Controls in the Russian Federation" signed by Prime Minister Chernomyrdin in Moscow on 28 February 1996]

[FBIS Translated Text] For the purpose of implementing Russian Federation Presidential Edict No. 1163 of 21 November 1995 "On Priority Measures To Step Up the System of Currency Controls in the Russian Federation," further developing the system of currency controls in conditions of the formation of a market economy, and liberalizing foreign economic activity, as well as enhancing coordination in the operations of the currency control agencies, the Russian Federation Government decrees that:

1. It is laid down that the examination of documents submitted by foreign importers resident in the country confirming the impossibility of returning monetary resources in foreign currency transferred from the Russian Federation abroad for the acquisition of goods, or the goods themselves equivalent in value to the amount of monetary resources spent on them, shall be carried out by the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations in cases envisaged by paragraph 3 of Russian Federation Presidential Edict No. 1163 of 21 November 1995 which provides the corresponding conclusion on the results of that examination.

2. The Russian Federal Service for Currency and Export Controls is empowered to adopt decisions on granting Russian Federation corporate entities deferments of up to six months for the payment of fines for violating Russian Federation currency legislation.

3. It is laid down that draft statutory acts sent by the federal executive organs to the Russian Federation Government for examination are to be coordinated by those organs with the Russian Federal Service for Currency and Export Controls insofar as they relate to currency control questions.

4. The Russian Federation State Customs Committee, the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and the Russian Federal Service for Currency and Export Control are to prepare within two months a draft Russian Federation presidential edict defining the procedure for implementing commodity exchange (barter) operations.

5. The Russian Federation State Customs Committee shall, within two months, submit to the Russian Federation Government for examination a draft agreement among the governments of the CIS states on common principles for currency control by those states' customs services.

6. The Russian Federal Service for Currency and Customs Control, the Russian Federation State Customs Committee, the Russian Federation Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations, and the Russian Federation Tax Police Department together with the Central Bank of the Russian Federation are to begin the creation of an information data base on violations of Russian Federation currency legislation.

7. The Russian Federal Service for Currency and Export Control, the Russian Federation State Customs Committee, the Russian Federation Finance Ministry, and the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations together with the Russian Federation Central Bank are to elaborate before 1 July 1996 a draft concept (basic guidelines) for the development of a system of currency control in the Russian Federation.

8. Paragraph 3, subparagraph A of the amendments and additions made to certain Russian Federation Government decisions approved by Russian Federation Government decree No. 556 of 3 June 1995 (SOBRANIYE ZAKONODATELSTVA ROSSIYSKOY FEDERATSII, 1995, no. 24, p. 2283) is acknowledged to have lapsed.

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[Signed] V. Chernomyrdin, chairman of the Russian Federation Government

Military Issues

Russia: Grachev Rejects Resignation 'Rumors'

LD1803114596 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1125 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Mikhail Shevtsov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW March 18 (Itar-Tass) — Russian Defence minister Pavel Grachev rejected rumours about his imminent resignation on Monday, saying he has a good relationship with the president and accusing unidentified forces of trying to make him step down.

"There have been no hints from the President of Russia about my resignation", Grachev told reporters after an award presentation ceremony.

He stressed that he has a good working relationship with the head of state and daily reports to him about the situation.

"It is another case that somebody wants my resignation. But I fulfil the set tasks honestly and properly to the extent to which my experience and capability allow me", Grachev said.

Rumours about a possible resignation of Grachev appeared before the last week meeting of the Security Council which passed a secret plan on the Chechen settlement.

Russia: Defense Ministry Convenes Session on Airborne Troops

MK1503150996 Moscow KOMMERSANT-DAILY in Russian 14 Mar 96 p 2

[Report by Ilya Bulavinov: "Press Barred From Classified Information"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Journalists are not frequent guests at Defense Ministry collegium sessions for rather understandable reasons — all the more so when they [the sessions] involve plans to reorganize table-of-organization structures and discuss troop employment plans. Yesterday an exception was made for some journalists (including your KOMMERSANT-DAILY correspondent).

There was much argument before the session on whether the press should be admitted, when, and for how long. They decided to admit it on condition that no pictures be taken of the top secret maps the walls of the collegium room were hung with. The decision to let the mass media in on the details of the matters under discussion was prompted by the topic of the discussion — the development of the Airborne Troops, which has of late also taken on a political tinge. This was the Defense Ministry's answer to accusations of "wrecking the Airborne Troops" — the presence of all top generals (deputy ministers and chief commanders took seats at a T-shaped table, with Grachev at its head, the chiefs of main and central directorates sitting at tables in the back of the hall) was intended to signal that there is no difference of opinion in the Defense Ministry.

Policy was also the buzzword with which Grachev began his introductory remarks: "Classified information appears in the open press, and it's high time to end this. Gathered here are, after all, competent people. But they have already gone as far as to claim that the Defense Ministry leadership is breaking down the Airborne Troops. One should realize that once conditions have changed, it is necessary to discuss new the tasks facing airborne troopers." The present appearance of the Airborne Troops, Grachev thinks, is not equal to the tasks they are to tackle in the event of local and other conflicts; weapons the Airborne Troops are equipped with today are obsolete.

However, hardly had Colonel General Yevgeniy Podkolzin, Airborne Troops commander, begun his keynote address with words about NATO's eastward expansion and the "redistribution of spheres of influence in the world" that has commenced, than Grachev decided to ask the press to leave after all. He, incidentally, made the journalists' life easier for that: On the one hand, their professional duty was to use any information (they were asked to attend after all); on the other hand, publishing all they heard and saw (including maps of possible operational employment of the Airborne Troops on the territory of adjoining states) could not only have resulted in undesirable contacts with the prosecutor's office, but also triggered more than one international scandal.

Upon completion of the two-hour session, General Podkolzin appeared before the journalists to say that, having heard the views of the Airborne Troops command, the deputy ministers and chief commanders of services of the armed forces, the collegium decided to fine-tune their proposals and revisit the issue once again on 17 May. In the words of the commander, they mainly discussed a numerical increase in equipment for the Airborne Troops (according to KOMMERSANT-DAILY's information, there are plans to provide additional armored equipment and the latest air defense assets) and defining specific missions for each combined unit. The general described as "fuss" statements made by the mass media and deputies about a breakdown of the Airborne Troops, while admitting that "at the time of the signing of the order (on the transfer to the ground troops

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of four separate airborne brigades — KOMMERSANT-DAILY), it was not coordinated with me, while in accordance with a preliminary understanding, there was a different time frame [for the transfer] — two years."

Federal Assembly

Russia: Duma Decree Rejects Denunciation of USSR Treaty

MM1503163396 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA in Russian 16 Mar 96 p 1

[Report by Natalya Bachurina under the general headline: "Belovezhskaya Forest According to the State Duma Deputies"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday the State Duma adopted a decree on deepening integration among the peoples that united to form the USSR and abolishing the RSFSR Supreme Soviet decree of 12 December 1991.

The preamble to the decree points out: "With the aim of opening up greater scope for the consistent voluntary integration of the fraternal peoples who united to form the USSR and on the basis of the will of the majority of the country's population as expressed in the nationwide referendum of 17 March 1991, the State Duma decrees that the RSFSR Supreme Soviet decree of 12 December 1991 'On Denouncing the Treaty on the Formation of the USSR' be deemed null and void."

The Russian president is told to elaborate a system of measures to further deepen the integration of Russia, Belarus, and the other former Union republics, including the holding of an all-Russia referendum on the problem of gradually strengthening the unity of the peoples that made up the USSR. The government is told to step up monitoring of the implementation of integration measures in the sphere of the economy, scientific and technical progress, and cultural and defense cooperation among states created on the territory of the USSR. Corresponding instructions are also given to the Federal Assembly deputation to the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly. Two hundred and fifty deputies voted in favor of the decree (226 votes are required for a decision). In addition, the State Duma adopted a decree on the legal validity for the Russian Federation of the results of the 17 March 1991 referendum on the question of preserving the USSR. This decree not only deems that the positive results of the 17 March referendum remain legally valid for Russia, but condemns the actions by officials that led to the elimination of the Union.

Russia: Duma Denunciation of CIS Foundation 'Has No Legal Effect'

LD1503183896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1629 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 15 (Interfax) — The decision taken by the State Duma today to denounce the 1991 CIS foundation agreements has no legal effect, Russian Constitutional Court lawyers have declared.

Deputies repealed the former Russian parliament's act of 1991 denouncing the 1922 USSR Formation Treaty.

However, the act had been ratified by the former Russian parliament and signed by the president.

"Thus, it can only be denounced in the form of a bill, passed by parliament and signed by the Russian president. All other normative acts are meaningless," a lawyer declared.

Russia: Medvedev Statement on Duma's 15 Mar 'USSR' Vote

MM1503210896 Moscow ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA in Russian 16 Mar 96 p 3

[Unattributed report: "Statement by Russian President's Press Secretary"]

[FBIS Translated Text] "The State Duma's adoption of the decree 'On Deepening the Integration of the Peoples United in the USSR and Revoking the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Decree of 12 December 1991' is timed to coincide with a certain date and is frankly opportunist in character. It is dubious both from the legal standpoint and the standpoint of the interests of millions of Russian citizens." That statement was made yesterday by Sergey Medvedev, the Russian Federation President's press secretary.

"The possible domestic and international consequences of this decision are unpredictable and could be highly dangerous. By calling into question the constitutional foundations of Russian statehood, the initiators of this political step are moving toward the destabilization of the domestic political situation in the country and are undermining the processes of the CIS countries' integration that are underway, as well as Russia's prestige in the international arena," the statement says.

"The president has been following events in the Duma closely and will issue the appropriate statement in the near future," the press secretary stated.

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Russia: Duma Speaker Defends Decision on Belovezh Accords

LD1603181896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1704 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 16 (Interfax) - Chairman of the Russian State Duma Gennadiy Seleznev has issued a statement to defend the State Duma's resolution of March 15 which has been sharply criticized by the leadership of Russia and other CIS countries.

The State Duma's Friday resolution de facto denounces the 1991 Belovezh accords on dismissing the USSR and creating the CIS.

"The State Duma's resolutions give no reason to speculate that somebody intends to restore the former state by force," Seleznev said. "Clever people understand that the will of the people rather than that of governors and parliamentarians is needed for a 'divorce' or a union," Seleznev said in a statement received by Interfax Saturday.

"Deputies who voted for adopting these resolutions declared after about five years passed that the great Soviet Union was destroyed despite the peoples' will and with gross violations of the USSR Constitution. They told the whole world on the behalf of their voters that the three leaders of former Soviet republics had stolen their [i.e. Russian voters'] country," Seleznev said.

"By these resolutions, State Duma deputies gave the president the opportunity to start the process of his political rehabilitation, as one of those who signed the unconstitutional Belovezh document, in the eyes of not only Russians but all USSR peoples," Seleznev said.

"The State Duma showed MPs of all countries that it is capable of reflecting the will and ideas of its voters," Seleznev said in the statement.

Russia: Decision on Reviving USSR Will Have 'Grave' Consequences

MM1803115296 Moscow TRUD in Russian 16 Mar 96 p 1

[Article by Nikolay Kishkin: "Quest for the Past. Duma Adopts Decisions Undermining Foundations of Russian Statehood"]

[FBIS Translated Text] For the second time since August 1991, perhaps without realizing it themselves, yesterday the Communists and their comrades in arms in the State Duma struck a blow against the desire of the peoples of the former USSR for rapprochement. The CPRF [Communist Party of the Russian Federation] faction and the Agrarian and "People's Power" groups had submitted to the Duma draft decrees unilaterally denouncing the decree adopted by the former parliament placing on record the disintegration of the Union. The intention to resurrect something that no longer exists with a simple press of a button can be attributed only to a total loss of contact with reality. Addressing the Duma, Grigoriy Yavlinskiy described this intention as legally untenable and essentially meaningless. Proposals to withdraw the issue from discussion or at least to invite the ambassadors of the other CIS countries along to learn their opinion were rejected. The Communists, supported by the LDPR [Liberal Democratic Party of Russia], stood firm. Naturally, they had forgotten that five years ago they themselves voted in favor of the decisions they were now proposing to rescind.

The electioneering nature of the populist action is quite obvious. This was an overt attempt to play on the feelings of people to whom the disintegration of a great country did indeed come as a painful blow, and it also clearly revealed a failure to understand that any unilateral actions by Russia will only increase anti-integration feeling among certain forces in the Commonwealth states, will breed mistrust of Moscow, and will prompt further speculation on national feeling. All these arguments were cited by the deputies opposed to hasty actions that can only complicate the situation and lead to directly opposite results. They also said that these abrupt actions by the Russian parliament will worsen the position of our compatriots in the former Union republics and will cause an upsurge in nationalist, anti-Russian feeling there.

But all this went unheeded. The Duma majority also ignored perfectly reasonable comments about the juridical inadvisability of the drafts as submitted. For instance, one of them restores the USSR and at the same time says that agreements concluded within the CIS framework can be implemented for the time being. But who is going to do this after this diktat on the part of the Duma? And if the USSR has been restored, where are we now living — in the USSR or in Russia? And the president of which country is going to be elected in June? And what is to become of membership of the Council of Europe?

There are many such questions. The instigators of what was yesterday described from the Duma platform as a "political adventure" preferred not to answer them. It is far simpler to activate the voting machine, which was duly done. Both decrees were adopted. Admittedly, they will scarcely acquire legal force. But we will now have to suffer grave political consequences.

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Russia: Duma's Threat To Annul CIS Accord Seen as 'Paper Tiger'

MK1603135996 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 2

[Report by Gleb Cherkasov: "Duma Plans To Rescind Russian Supreme Soviet's Resolution Ratifying CIS Agreements. President Reproaches Parliamentary Majority for Opposing Integrationist Processes"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The State Duma is due to consider the resolution "On Deepening the Integration of the Peoples That Joined Into the Union of SSR [Soviet Socialist Republics] and Rescinding the Resolution of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] Supreme Soviet of 12 December 1991" at its today's plenary session. It should be recalled that the 1991 resolution ratified the agreement between three Slav republics on setting up the CIS. The question was raised at the initiative of the factions of the Communist Party [CPRF], Agrarian Party, and the "People's Power" group, which have a majority of seats in the parliament's lower chamber, something that augurs this document's likely adoption.

Not only does the draft Duma resolution deem the resolution of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet to be "no longer valid," but it stipulates that related pieces of legislation and other legal documents creating rules of law will "be adjusted as the sister peoples move toward greater integration and unity." It recommends to Boris Yeltsin "to draw up a system of measures in order to further deepen the integration of the Russian Federation, Belarus, and other former republic of the USSR," including an all-Russia referendum on the problem of "gradually fostering the unity of peoples that made up the Union of SSR."

At the same time, Viktor Ilyukhin, chairman of the State Duma's security committee, told journalists that the resolution would not affect the 1991 agreement on setting up the CIS or any interstate agreements stemming from it. Anatoliy Lukyanov, chairman of the legislation and judicial reform committee, for his part, thinks that in case the Duma resolution should be passed, a number of other legislative documents will still have to be adopted to back the decision on abrogating the 1922 treaty on forming the USSR.

It should be noted that the legal grounds for the Duma resolution look fairly doubtful. Under the current Constitution, international agreements can only be ratified or abrogated by law, not by resolution. This point that was made by Sergey Belyayev, leader of the "Our Home Is Russia" faction. At the same time, Mr. Lukyanov insists that the Supreme Soviet did not have the right to pass a resolution ratifying the agreement on the CIS because this was a prerogative of the Congress of People's Deputies.

Apart from "Our Home Is Russia," the resolution is also opposed by Grigoriy Yavlinskiy's followers. Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the committee on international affairs ("Yabloko") likened the resolution to a "paper tiger," suggesting that it might cause a "short-term negative outcry" in certain former Union republics, but "will not entail any real legal or political consequences."

Viktor Ilyukhin said that the initiative of the Communists and their allies has nothing to do with the presidential campaign. "We want gradually to take steps toward integrating the republics of the former USSR," the parliamentarian said. Mr. Lukin, for his part, is inclined to attribute the CPRF's activity in this area precisely to the approaching election. Recalling that the Communists also voted for the CIS agreement in December 1991, the "Yabloko" spokesman suggested jokingly that a provision be included in the draft resolution denouncing the Supreme Soviet deputies who approved the agreement on setting up the CIS.

Without waiting for the deputies' decision, Boris Yeltsin granted an interview for Russian television yesterday night, in which he severely criticized actions by the parliamentary majority. Mr. Yeltsin said that the integrationist processes in CIS countries are gathering momentum, whereas the Communist deputies are trying to obstruct them.

Russia: Vote Shows CPRF Inconsistent, Untrustworthy

MM1503165596 Moscow IZVESTIYA in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 2

[Article by Teymuraz Mamaladze of the IZVESTIYA Analysis Center: "Five Years Ago the Communists Voted To Dismantle the USSR. Yesterday They Abrogated That Decision. What Can We Expect From Them Tomorrow?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Russian Federation State Duma has adopted a decree the draft of which was submitted by the CPRF [Communist Party of the Russian Federation] faction — "On Deepening Integration Among the Peoples Which Were United in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Abrogation of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Decree of 12 December 1991."

Let us remind you that in the previous Duma the same faction sought a vote on a draft law "On the Elimination of the Extremely Negative Political and Economic Consequences of the 1991 Belovezhskaya Agreements" with its key demand for the abrogation of

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the 12 December 1991 RSFSR Supreme Soviet decree "On the Denunciation of the Treaty on the Formation of the USSR."

It should also be recalled that the abrogation of this act and the restoration of the USSR is one of the main program slogans which the Zyuganov Communists took into the December Duma elections and won.

In other words, the winners are demonstrating enviable consistency in implementing their program provisions.

Turning to the events of five years ago, they prompt us to recreate a picture of the day the RSFSR Supreme Soviet ratified the agreement on creating the CIS by an overwhelming majority.

Concluded on 8 December 1991 by the presidents of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, it was ratified by the Ukrainian and Belarusian parliaments in record time. The Russian Federation Supreme Soviet session of 12 December the same year was intended to complete this ratification sprint.

It was indeed completed speedily and harmoniously. The session started at 10 in the morning. By 1328 and 34 seconds it was all over. Of the 173 deputies from both chambers who voted on the problem of the decree on denouncing the Union treaty of 1992 [as published; presumably misprint for 1922], 161 voted for, nine abstained, and three voted against.

Addressing a joint session of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, V.I. Sevastyanov (of the "Fatherland" group of orthodox Communists) said, in particular:

"...Where will this road take us? That is the main question facing us. And as yet we are still not very clear about this, although we do realize that the direction in maybe a short period of time will be forward..... The main question is the liquidation of the Union. We must demand the convening of a congress of RSFSR people's deputies to examine this question. But there is a positive aspect. With this, thank God, the Gorbachev era has ended...."

Having completed his verbal slalom between God and Gorbachev, Communist deputy V.I. Sevastyanov, hero of the Soviet Union, voted for the juridical finalization of the liquidation of the Soviet Union.

Vitaliy Ivanovich is not the only member of the CPRF faction in the current Duma who made his contribution as a deputy to this result. He was joined in voting for the ratification of the Belovezhskaya agreements and the denunciation of the Union treaty by all 15 "Communists of Russia" faction deputies who participated in the vote, 14 and 11 Agrarians respectively [as published], including two members of the present CPRF faction, six deputies from the "Fatherland" faction, and so forth. To tumultuous applause, as the stenographic record states.

S.N. Reshulskiy was the only current CPRF deputy who abstained from denouncing the Union treaty.

The next day PRAVDA, which at the time was edited by current State Duma Speaker G.N. Seleznev, appeared with the following headlines: "Russian Parliament Ratifies Agreement on Commonwealth of Independent States"; and "All-Russian Stock Exchange Bank Shares Are a Guarantee of Your Success and a Symbol of Your Prosperity" was carried above the "abolition" of the Union — in full accordance with the conditions of the time.

The question of consistency no longer applies.

The high value placed on 1996 Communist shares compels the architects of yesterday's Duma initiative to look to mysticism and diabolism for justification for their position of five years ago: They were misled by the devil. B. Yeltsin, that is, who, in the words of the CPRF leader, deceived the Communist deputies. The president delivered a comprehensively argued substantiation of the motives for concluding the Belovezhskaya agreements. At the time you could either agree of disagree with him, but the important thing today is that on 12 December 1991 virtually everyone agreed with him, including the Communists — rapidly, on their feet, and to tumultous sustained applause. By contrast the next item on the agenda — a collection of laws on internal RSFSR incomes and taxes - - triggered a debate which greatly exceeded the previous sitting in terms of liveliness and duration.

Maybe it should be a case of "let bygones be bygones?" Plus the Communists are calling for the past to be raked over only in the context and using the modalities of the historical dialectic method. But even that method does not take away the question of what we can expect from yesterday's people as changeable as a weather vane in today's wind. From "turncoats," to use a favorite term from the Zyuganov-Anpilov propaganda armory.

An ostentatious propaganda move — that's all you can say about this Communist initiative manifestly targeted on June. One which, as always, takes no account of the political consequences it might have — in Russia and the CIS countries.

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Regional Affairs

Russia: Regional Official Comments on Ethnic Demographics

LD1503165696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1301 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 15 (Interfax) — Bashkortostan's leadership has headed for a separate state since October 11, 1990, when that republic passed a State Sovereignty Declaration, Aleksandr Arinin, a member of the parliamentary faction Our Home is Russia elected in Bashkortostan, declared at a news conference in Moscow today.

As the instruments of such a policy, he cited "national separatism in relations with the Russian Federation, ethnic nationalism in personnel, educational, and cultural policies, and the suppression of civil rights and freedoms in Bashkortostan."

"A vicious practice has emerged to divide people into indigenous and not indigenous populations" in the republic represented by 112 nationalities, more than 40 percent of whom are Russians, almost 29 percent Tatars, and nearly 22 percent Bashkirs, Arinin claims. A bill drafted by the republican justice department refers to Russians and Tatars as ethnic minorities although they comprise the two biggest national communities in Bashkortostan, Arinin said, adding that in the bill on languages status Bashkir is proclaimed the national language of the republic.

"The division of people on grounds of nationality, language, and origin leads to the unscrupulous dismissal of non-Bashkirs from top positions in central and local bodies of power, higher educational establishments, scientific research centers, industrial enterprises, and law-enforcement bodies," Arinin said.

Russia: Maritime Governor Opposes Yeltsin's Edict on PRC Border

MK1603082196 Moscow NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Nazdratenko Is Against Border Demarcation"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Maritime Kray Governor Yevgeniy Nazdratenko has appealed to the Kray Duma and Maritime deputies of the Russian Federation State Duma asking them to prevent the ceding of about 1,500 hectares of Maritime Kray territory to China. The ceding of a part of the Maritime territory is envisioned in the edict of the Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin on the finalization, in accordance with the 1991 agreement between the USSR and China, of demarcation work in the eastern sector of the Russian-Chinese border. According to Maritime Kray Duma staffers, at present the Duma is preparing an inquiry regarding lawfulness and constitutionality of the presidential edict, which will be sent to the Russian Federation State Duma and, possibly, to the Russian Constitutional Court.

Russia: Maritime Said Threatening Action Against Government Debts

MK1503151696 Moscow KOMMERSANT-DAILY in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 3

[Report by Denis Demkin: "Maritime Kray Demands Heating and Lighting"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Maritime Kray Duma has held an emergency session to emphasize that the federal budget's debt to a number of Maritime Kray enterprises is one of the reasons for the worsening of the fuel and energy crisis in the kray and for an unprecedented rise in social tension. Some deputies proposed to bring pressure to bear on Moscow, to stop paying taxes into the federal budget. At least until the state treasury retires its debts to the kray. [passages omitted]

The causes of the energy crisis in Maritime Kray lie on the surface. Last February, KOMMERSANT-DAILY predicted that the policy followed by Governor Yevgeniy Nazdratenko of artificially restraining electric power tariffs counting on federal subsidies would sooner or later lead to negative social consequences. Today, debit indebtedness of "Primorskugol" [coal mining company] is nearing one trillion rubles [R]. The biggest debtor is "Dalenergo" with R500 billion. The latter also has debtors: its consumers, which are mainly big defense complex enterprises.

Far from being a mere coincidence is the statement made Wednesday [13 March] by Fuel and Energy Minister Yuriy Shafranik on being ready to sign an order prohibiting energy cuts to consumers who do not pay their bills. "Now decisions of this kind will only be based on analysis of each specific case," Shafranik stated. The ministry intends to put into action a "superflexible" system that would permit giving tariff rebate to those who pay their bills regularly and to raise tariffs for persistent nonpayers. The introduction of daytime and nighttime tariffs are also being prepared.

This, however, does not cause any special enthusiasm in Maritime Kray. The local authorities realize that help will be primarily given to regions with much bigger electorate. Local political sympathies are unable to make much difference on the federal level. The realization of this makes the authorities resort to the loudest forms

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of protest. One should see precisely as such the threat of the kray duma deputies to pass a law suspending payment into the federal budget until the government has paid off its debt.

Russia: Upcoming St. Petersburg Mayoral Election Discussed

MK1603091896 Moscow KOMMERSANT-DAILY in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 3

[Report by Igor Arkhipov: "Presidential Service Rendered to Sobchak"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Boris Yeltsin's edict, which some politicians thought essential for calling an election for head of administration of St. Petersburg, has appeared after all. In accordance with it, an election for governor (so will henceforth be called, by the will of local deputies, head of St. Petersburg's executive branch of power) will be held on 19 May. Not all is that simple, however.

The presidential edict is a compromise between representatives of both branches of power [as published] in St. Petersburg and the presidential staff. It has been drawn up with the participation of Mayor Sobchak, who had a meeting specially on this matter with Viktor Chernomyrdin a few days ago. Chernomyrdin, for his part, forwarded a corresponding proposal to Boris Yeltsin. The presidential staff's view that the election for St. Petersburg mayor should be moved to December (to get them out of the way of the presidential election) aroused strong opposition of the mayor's office and the Legislative Assembly (they said that extending Sobchak's term is unconstitutional and that in the absence of a legitimate authority an "appointee" can be sent from Moscow at any moment, who, after 16 June, might be a Communist).

The mayor suggested to the Legislative Assembly deputies that they pass amendments to the law on the elections for head of the city's executive branch, approved earlier. Despite all attempts by First Deputy Mayor Vladimir Putin at persuasion, the deputies finally decided to disrupt the voting on the elections for head of St. Petersburg's executive branch. The Communists and "Lyubimyy Gorod" [Beloved City] (St. Petersburg branch of the "Yabloko" movement) could not come up with any other way to prevent the coming into force of the presidential edict and walked out of the hall. If not for "the disruption of a quorum," the law "On Introduction of Changes...," proposed by the president, and the earlier passed, St. Petersburg's law "On Elections For Head of the Executive Branch" would have been passed — originally, 27 of the 49 Legislative Assembly deputies spoke in their support. The situation is spicy in that, unless riders to St. Petersburg's law "On Elections For Head of the Executive Branch" are passed and published in the municipal press (such is the requirement of the federal law on constitutional guarantees of citizens' voting rights), Yeltsin would have to issue some other new edict, or the elections for mayor of St. Petersburg are not going to be held before the presidential election after all.

According to the latest survey conducted by the Independent Analytical Center, Sobchak enjoys the support of 34 percent of the voters who have decided they will surely go to the polls. For this reason, he stated, commenting on the presidential edict, that he is not gaining anything from moving the election date, whereas "even two months will be enough to all serious candidates for their promotion campaign." Furthermore, regardless of the mayoral election's outcome, he is getting an opportunity to "actively participate in Boris Yeltsin's campaign" and is even prepared to "join philosophical debate with Zyuganov about Communism." Sobchak is not worried that separate elections for governor would require additional funds: he "did not even count what it may cost." Nor does the mayor doubt his fellow citizens' awareness of their civil duty. These will have to go to the polls on four occasions inside two months — there is no one in the city to doubt that the May and the June elections will be held in two rounds.

Russia: Turnout Reported for Belgorod, Tyumen Regional Elections

LD1803073896 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0652 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Vitaliy Ilgov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] BELGOROD, March 18 (Itar-Tass) — The Belgorod region, Central Russia, on Sunday, March 17, elected deputies to city and district councils and the heads of administration in most of its cities and districts. According to the electoral commission reports all elections were good with more than 53 percent of the voters turning out for the voting.

Rural dwellers were particularly active in the elections.

A total of 380 deputies to city and district councils, 22 heads of local governments and two deputies to the regional legislature were to be elected.

Independent candidates had good chances of winning, as well as representatives of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, whose canvassers were most active in the election campaign, according to chairman of the regional electoral commission Nikolai Pletnev.

Pletnev said the chances of the nominees of Yabloko and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia were

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negligible. None of the Liberal Democrats was elected to the State Duma in the last December elections, he said.

The elections of administration heads and deputies to the city legislature were held on Sunday in the Western Siberia and city of Tyumen [sentence as received]. Despite optimistic forecasts, the turnout here was only half of what it was in the December elections to the State Duma.

Three hours before the end of voting, only 27.3 percent of the registered voters had been recorded as having been to the polls but it was enough to make the elections good: in accordance with rules for the mayoral elections, a 25-percent turnout is sufficient.

The current election campaign in the regions is characterised by a clear-cut political demarkation of the candidates, particularly among those who was running for seats in the city legislature. The two rival ideologies — the communists and the democrats — nominated candidates in every constituency and both campaigned under the slogan "We are electing not only deputies, we are electing our future."

In the mayoral elections, the situation was somewhat different. All contestants posed as "independent." The regional chapter of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia was even forced to drop two "disobedient" members who refused to drop out of the race in favour of the party's regional leader.

Economic Issues

Russia: Duma Official on Moscow's Expected Admission to Paris Club

LD1503191496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1710 GMT 15 Mar 96

[By Robert Serebrennikov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 15 (Itar-Tass) — Russia's expected admission to the Club of Paris may greatly help it have its credits back, deputy chief of the State Duma Committee for Budget, Taxation and Finances Aleksandr Zhukov told Itar-Tass on Friday.

As a member of the Club, Russia will have the same rights as its other members as far as demands to debtor states are concerned, Zhukov said.

Without the entry into the Club, it would be much more difficult for Russia to have its credits paid, he said.

Developing countries have an aggregate debt of about 130 billion US dollars to Russia. The international financial community should take this fact into consideration, he stressed.

Russia's principal consent to participation in the Club of Paris came as a result of talks between Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Club of Paris President Christian Noyer this week.

The official announcement of Russia's admittance to the Club will be reportedly made at a G 7 meeting in Lyon next June. However, a Russian representative will begin work at the Club headquarters as early as March 18.

Russia should have been admitted to the Club long ago, Zhukov said.

Russia: Use of German Credit Said Possible To Settle Wage Arrears

MK1503151596 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "A Credit of German Banks Can Be Used To Settle Arrears of Wages"]

[FBIS Translated Text] According to Mikhail Zadornov, chairman of the State Duma Budget Committee, a credit given by FRG banks, amounting to 4 billion deutsche marks [DM], can be used to settle arrears of wages of budget-funded workers. The question of credit granting was agreed upon during the recent visit of FRG Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Moscow. The first credit, worth DM3 billion, is earmarked to provide direct support to the economic reforms carried out by the Russian government; the second one, worth DM1 billion, is allocated to the cabinet of ministers to be used for the funding of long-term projects.

Russia: Livshits Details Regional Payouts

LD1503201296 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Report by correspondent Sergey Suntsov on interview with Presidential Aide Aleksandr Livshits; from the "Vremya" newscast; passages contained within quotation marks are recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] The government began to implement today the president's plan to render financial support to the regions, Presidential Aide Aleksandr Livshits told our program in an interview. The resources are to pay the overdue wages.

[Livshits] "Wages for teachers, doctors, especially those working with children, other welfare payments are, of course, primarily a matter for the region concerned.

"However, the president proceeds from the premise that there are no citizens of, say, Pskov or Tambov regions, but we are all citizens of Russia. If the local budget

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situation is unsatisfactory — and this all too often happens due to completely objective reasons — then the central authorities and, first and foremost the president, as the guarantor of our rights, cannot stand aloof."

[Suntsov] Reports on the payments to regions will be put out daily.

[Livshits] "So, Belgorod Region has received R [rubles] 34.4 billion from the federal budget, mainly to spend on the tasks I have been talking about. According to a document agreed upon with the leadership of the region, this sum represents 100 percent of what was agreed.

"Moscow Region has received R146.5 billion — also 100 percent; the Orel Region has received R43.4 billion — 100 percent. The Republic of Udmurtia has received R142.3 billion — 100 percent. Vologda Region has received R32.1 billion, which also represents 100 percent."

[Suntsov] The wage indebtedness to servicemen, those employed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the courts, and partly miners through subsidies will have been repaid from the federal budget by the end of March.

[Livshits] "Things are really hard for the defense complex. We have found a formula allowing for a substantial improvement in the situation."

[Suntsov] Aleksandr Livshits noted that those employed by defense enterprises should receive ready money during the first few days in April.

Russia: Kadannikov Discusses Back Wages With Union Leaders

LD1503203496 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1804 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Presidential Bulletin" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Back wages will be paid to state employees before the end of March, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told Interfax Friday.

Government ministers and regional governors have discussed schedules for paying the back wages, he said. "When they are short of cash to pay the wages, interest-free loans will be given to the regions in compliance with the decision made by President Boris Yeltsin," Chernomyrdin explained.

Chernomyrdin will hold a conference Friday afternoon with some of his deputies and heads of Russian financial agencies to discuss a specific schedule for paying back wages to state employees before the end of March.

First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Kadannikov met with the leaders of regional and sectorial unions under the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia. He said that 1.1 trillion rubles would be transferred to the regions from the federal budget on Friday to be spent on the payment of wages to the public sector and on other social payments.

This money will be disbursed under the schedule whose implementation begins on March 15, Kadannikov said. The channeling of federal budget funds to the regions under this schedule will help pay off wage arrears in the public sector, Kadannikov said.

The schedule was devised following consultations between the government's leadership and the governors of subsidized regions, Kadannikov said. These consultations were held on Monday and Tuesday. Under the protocols drawn up on the results of the consultations, the governors assumed to use the money only as stipulated in the schedule for wage payment and repay the debts before the end of this month.

The regional authorities earlier often used federal budget funds earmarked for the payment of wages to pay off credits earlier borrowed from commercial banks or spent them on other needs, Kadannikov said. Corresponding inspections revealed 830 incidents involving the diversion of funds intended for the payment of wages. Those responsible have been fined, Kadannikov said, adding that criminal cases have been instituted among a number of those responsible.

Under the schedule, the federal budget will repay the 1.5 trillion ruble debt on 1995 transfers in March, Kadannikov said. Current transfer payments will total 4.3 trillion rubles in March, he said. [passage omitted]

Russia: Economy Minister Yasin Supports Yeltsin

MS1803102296 London FINANCIAL TIMES in English 18 Mar 96 p 3

[Report by Christia Freeland incorporating remarks by Russian minister of economy Mr Evgeniy Yasin; date and place not given: "Last Reformer in the Kremlin Fights On"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Since the Communist triumph in December's parliamentary elections, liberal reformers have often seemed an endangered species in Russian President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle.

Some, like Mr Andrey Kozyrev, the former pro-western foreign minister, and Mr Anatoliy Chubays, the architect of Russia's market reforms, were sacked by the Kremlin leader in an effort to appeal to the disgruntled electorate ahead of the June 16 presidential ballot.

Others, like Mr Sergey Kovalyev, once the head of the president's human rights commission, resigned in

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disgust, warning that Mr Yeltsin had become no better than his Communist rivals.

In the midst of this political tumult, one member of the radical team which has spearheaded market reforms since the Gorbachev era has held on to his cabinet post — Mr Evgeniy Yasin, the minister of the economy.

Since the purge of reformers began, there have been flurries of speculation that Mr Yasin was next. Mr Yeltsin fuelled those rumours by reprimanding the economics minister for failing to fund a combine-harvester factory whose manager is a friend of the president.

But despite this public humiliation and the departure of many of his closest allies, Mr Yasin has held his post and continues to back the president.

Mr Yasin insists that was not "offended" by Mr Yeltsin's attack. He regrets Mr Chubays's dismissal, but it is not "a tragedy".

Like a growing number of Russian liberals, Mr Yasin argues that, whatever his defects, Mr Yeltsin must be supported because he is the only alternative to the increasingly popular Communists.

"I know one thing — for the reform process to continue, President Yeltsin must win," Mr Yasin says.

"Not because he is an ideal man, not because he never makes mistakes. But I am convinced that he has tied his fate to that of reforms. And the defeat of reforms would be more of a personal defeat for him than even defeat at the elections would be. It is impossible for him to abandon this course." Another source of Mr Yasin's enduring loyalty to the volatile Kremlin chief is his belief that the Communists stand a very good chance of winning the June presidential ballot.

"The danger (of a Communist victory) is very great," Mr Yasin says. "The threat of a Communist revanche is, naturally, very high. Why should it be any different here from Poland or Hungary?"

Unlike some western and Russian businessmen, who have been won over by the efforts of Mr Gennadiy Zyuganov, the Communist party leader, to reassure the financial community, Mr Yasin believes a Communist victory would be a serious economic and political setback for Russia.

"I don't want to paint an apocalyptic picture. I do not think there would be huge, radical changes immediately, Mr Yasin says.

"Mr Zyuganov might, in the first three months, do nothing wrong. But what will happen after that, when he begins to fulfil his pre-election promises?"

The mounting prospect of a Communist president has prompted soul-searching among some democrats, who have begun to look for the mistakes which may have paved the way for a Communist comeback.

But Mr Yasin does not believe that Kremlin errors are responsible for the popularity of the Communists. He believes popular dissatisfaction with radical economic reforms is the inevitable by-product of transforming Russia's centrally planned behemoth into a market economy.

"The price of reforms is particularly high in Russia," Mr Yasin argues. "This is not because President Yeltsin made mistakes but because here there are the deepest deformations, the most difficult problems."

He said he had met Mr Vaclav Klaus, the prime minister of the Czech Republic, at the recent world economic summit in Davos. "We had a roundtable discussion. He explained to us that we had done this wrong and done that wrong." Mr Yasin had a sharp rejoinder for the renowned Prague reformer: "I told him that in order to successfully conduct reforms it was necessary to be prime minister of the Czech Republic, rather than prime minister of Russia."

But although he believes that radical market reforms are unpopular no matter how skilfully they are implemented, Mr Yasin also thinks that, less than three months ahead of the presidential ballot, the time has come to slow down.

"Of course, elections slow things down," Mr Yasin says. "It is not just a question of material losses, of the lowering of the standard of living, it is also the difficulty of becoming accustomed to a new way of life.

"The time is nearing when people can express their view about all of the recent changes, and they did not all study in university, so many think that today everything is going badly, they think they are worse off than before.

"For that reason, we must to some extent put on the brakes and take into consideration to a greater degree social costs."

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International Affairs

Ukraine: Kuchma Expects Yeltsin Visit To Raise Level of Ties

LD1403190496 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1709 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, March 14 (INTERFAX-Ukraine) — Ukraine is waiting for Russian President Boris Yeltsin to pay an official visit there to sign an already initialled state treaty, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma said Thursday.

"I am confident this visit will raise the qualitative level of our relations," Kuchma said by satellite to attendees of a celebration marking the opening of a modern telecommunications center in Moscow Thursday..

Ukraine and Russia are united by a realistic assessment of today's situation and understanding of goals to achieve, Kuchma said. "This helps develop our relations in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect and equality," he said.

Addressing Italian President Luigi Scalfaro, Kuchma expressed hope that "Italy's chairmanship in the European Union will become an efficient factor of intensification of Ukraine's trade and economic cooperation with member-states of this influential European institution."

At talks with his South Korean counterpart, Kim Yong-sam, Kuchma said "a dynamic dialogue between the leaders of our states is of paramount importance for efficient bilateral relations." He said he considered his future visit to South Korea in this respect.

Ukraine: Foreign Ministry Briefing Previews Christopher Visit

AU1503122296 Kiev HOLOS UKRAYINY in Ukrainian 14 Mar 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "A Continuation of the Dialogue"]

[FBIS Translated Text] As reported by UKRINFORM, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher will arrive in Kiev on 19 March for a working visit. During the visit, he is expected to meet with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko, and other high-ranking state officials. This was stated at a briefing held at Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It was pointed out that the visit is a continuation of the regular political dialogue at all levels between Ukraine and the United States. It was agreed during the meeting between Leonid Kuchma and Warren Christopher in Helsinki.

In Kiev, a series of questions will be discussed dealing with bilateral Ukrainian-U.S. relations, ways of intensifying them, and also assistance on the part of the United States in the implementation of economic reforms in Ukraine. The sides will focus on problems of regional European security and will discuss a complex of issues pertaining to Ukrainian-American-Russian accords in the sphere of nuclear weapons withdrawal from Ukraine.

Ukraine: Talks With Russia on Oil Transit Tariffs Continue

AU1403140696 Kiev URYADOVYY KURYER in Ukrainian 12 Mar 96 p 3

[Report by Stepan Yaloveha: "Without Intervention by Third Forces"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Talks continue between representatives of the Russian Ministry of Fuel and Energy and the Ukrainian State Oil and Gas Industry Company on the tariffs for transporting oil through the "Druzhba" [Friendship] oil pipeline. The Ukrainian side proposed, starting from 1 January 1996, a tariff of $5.20 for pumping one metric ton of oil over a distance of 715 kilometers. The Russians insist on maintaining last year's price of transport services, at the level of $4.70. In the course of negotiations, a protocol was concluded in which it is stressed that the sides had not reached an accord and will appeal to the Secretariat of the International Energy Charter, which will consider this controversial issue. For resolving it, all the necessary estimates have been presented, but the Russians believe that the tariffs for oil transportation across their territory should be estimated somewhat differently.

Ukraine explains its position on raising the tariffs by a weighty circumstance: The "Druzhba" oil pipeline, which runs across its territory, must satisfy all technical requirements and have guaranteed safe operation. This clearly requires outlays.

As things stand now, about 40 Russian companies and firms have already signed contracts with the "Druzhba" enterprise and agree to pay $5.20 for transporting one ton of oil over a distance of 715 kilometers, this price being among the lowest in the world. All of them have made an advance payment, and oil continues to be supplied to Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. It is true, though, that the Russian Ministry of Fuel and Energy is "putting pressure" on these companies to cancel the contracts.

Yevhen Dovzhok, head of the Ukrainian State Oil and Gas Industry Company, emphasized that the talks will continue. He recently got a phone call from Moscow, from his Russian colleagues, who proposed that the issue be discussed in a new way. We believe,

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underscored Ye. Dovzhok, that this must be done without the assistance of the international organizations, and accord may be reached without intervention of third forces. This will be better for both Russia and Ukraine. Nobody needs this problem; it is a matter for the corresponding departments of the two states, and there can be no political considerations here. I believe, pointed out Ye. Dovzhok, that we will reach an accord in the very near future.

Ukraine: Source Previews Yeltsin's Visit, Accords To Be Signed

LD1503164696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1451 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, March 15 (INTERFAX-Ukraine) — Numerous agreements as well as a political treaty and accords on the Black Sea Fleet division will be signed during Russian President Boris Yeltsin's visit to Ukraine. They cover cooperation in deep space research and the setting up of a Deep Space Research Center, the housing arrangement and service of diplomats representing the two countries, shipping in internal waters, and the operation of information and cultural centers.

The Russian negotiators also intend to draft agreements on Russian TV and radio broadcasts in Ukraine and on cooperation in the operation of mass media, a source in the Kiev government told Interfax-Ukraine.

Ukraine: Commentary Warns of Primakov's Anti-Ukraine Policy

AU1503175196 Lvov ZA VILNU UKRAYINU in Ukrainian 7 Mar 96 p 1

[Unattributed commentary: "Beware — Primakov!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] **Primakov, new minister of the Russian Federation foreign department, stated that postcommunist Russia had gone too far in establishing friendly relations with adversaries from the times of the "Cold War."** In an interview for IZVESTIYA, he stated that Russia should not talk of any strategic union with them. This may be civilized, or perhaps, privileged partnership with some of them. Primakov pointed out that Russia had, until now, been carried away by its relations with the United States. Now, relations with former USSR republics must become Moscow's highest priority.

Ukraine had felt these "relations" on itself even before Primakov. We must now be particularly cautious, all the more so since Primakov seeks to achieve a new and strong role in the world for Moscow.

Ukraine: Foreign Ministry: Russian Duma Decision 'Internal Act'

LD1503184396 Kiev UT-1 Television Network in Ukrainian 1700 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] We have just received a statement from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry is authorized to state that the resolution approved by the Russian Federation State Duma does not entail any legal consequences for Ukraine, reads the statement, since it is an internal act of the Russian Federation which cannot have any extraterritorial jurisdiction. In addition, the implementation of such a resolution, in effect, would mean Russia's exit from the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] along with the ensuing unforeseen consequences.

Ukraine, as a member state of the CIS, since the very beginning of the CIS's existence, has conducted a policy to deepen and broaden equal and mutually advantageous cooperation. Within the framework of the CIS, Ukraine proceeds from the fact that its participation and status in the CIS is defined by legislative acts approved by the Supreme Council of Ukraine, such as the ratification of agreements on the creation of the CIS along with the appended reservations. Ukraine will continue to proceed from the understanding that the creation of the CIS enabled the close and multilateral links that existed between the republics of the former USSR to be preserved in new historical conditions and averted the development of dangerous trends on the territory of the former USSR that could have led to general instability and serious conflicts.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry is compelled to state that certain political forces in some member states of the CIS are resorting to steps that would seriously complicate the situation in the CIS against the background of progressive processes, and the strengthening and deepening of bilateral and multilateral contacts within the framework of the CIS. The decision by the Russian Federation State Duma should be viewed precisely in such terms.

This was a statement from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry.

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Ukraine: Kuchma: Duma Decision 'Threat' to Neighbors' Independence

LD1503200196 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Interview with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, by announcer Igor Gmyza, in the "Vremya" newscast; Kuchma in Kiev, Gmyza in studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Gmyza] Good evening, Mr. President.

[Kuchma] Good evening.

[Gmyza] Mr. President, why do you think the Russian State Duma should have raised the question of the restoration of the Soviet Union?

[Kuchma] It is difficult to find an intelligible answer to such an unusual question, all the more so if you take into account the fact that recently a representative delegation of the State Duma paid an official visit to Ukraine, headed by the speaker. The delegation assured the entire Ukrainian people of the tremendous respect felt for the country's independence and sovereignty. And, all of a sudden, the Duma passes such a diametrically different decision today. All I can assume is that this is linked with the election campaign in Russia as the first step taken by the State Duma's communist group. I have no other explanations.

[Gmyza] Well, Leonid Danylovych, we naturally understand that the Duma's initiative does not in itself entail any legal consequences. However, if one assumes that at a certain point in time the Russian parliament nevertheless takes to insisting that the Union should be restored, what will Ukraine's reaction be in such a situation?

[Kuchma] Ukraine is an independent and sovereign state, born not in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, but following the 1 December 1991 referendum in which almost 92 percent of the voters voted for Ukraine becoming a genuinely independent state.

I can unequivocally state that this decision poses a threat to the independence of the neighboring countries which were part of the Soviet Union in the past and also to the whole world community and it is surely this premise that should be taken as the starting point here. I also think that the Russian legislators have placed a mine under the CIS when they said that it was Russia — rather than us all — that was leaving the commonwealth. I can pose the question in this manner, quite legitimately so.

[Gmyza] Leonid Danylovych, if they start to push through and insist that the Union should be strengthened and regenerated, will not Ukraine start to push through with joining NATO?

[Kuchma] I do not think that there should be any linkage here with regard to this problem, this question, since we proceed on the basis of all our legislative decisions and, in the first place, on the basis of the declaration of Ukraine's state sovereignty, where it is written in black and white that Ukraine is a nonaligned, neutral state, so this has the force of law for the president and everyone must obey the law.

[Gmyza] Mr. President, thank you and good-bye. We are grateful to you for having found the time and for having agreed to reply to our questions.

[Kuchma] I, too, thank you, Igor, for our meeting today.

Ukraine: Kuchma: Duma Shows 'Enormous Lack of Respect' for Ukraine

LD1503213096 Kiev UT-1 Television Network in Ukrainian 1900 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Today the Russian State Duma adopted a decision to declare invalid the resolution of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet denouncing the treaty on setting up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Russian State Duma also confirmed for Russia the results of the referendum of 17 March 1991 on preserving the USSR. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma commented on the decision by the Russian State Duma in an interview with Ukrainian Television news.

[Begin recording] [Unidentified Correspondent] Mr. President, could you tell us the likely consequences for Ukraine of the decision by the Russian State Duma?

[Kuchma] From the legal point of view the decision has no consequences, but from the moral point of view I think the consequences are enormous. The top legislative body of Russia has shown what its aspirations are and how it sees the future. From their point of view the future is a return to the USSR without having asked the Ukrainians, the Kazakhs, the Uzbeks, or the other countries that make up the CIS. By doing this they have put a question mark over the existence of the CIS. What sort of creation is it when Russia, by issuing such a statement, has virtually left the CIS. I think that it also shows an enormous lack of respect for Ukraine and an attempt by one country to incite some kind of hostility against another.

The people of Ukraine made its decision at the all-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991, and it would therefore be inexpedient, from any point of view, to raise that issue again. And later we will see who is the winner and who is the loser. I think they will gain nothing from spreading the election campaign to the entire territory of the CIS member states — I believe

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it was one of the reasons behind the adoption [by the Russian State Duma of a resolution denouncing the Belovezh accords] under the pressure of the Communist faction.

I think that many people in Ukraine are now well aware of what road the State Duma and the forces that are dominating in it have embarked on. Will they confirm their loyalty to Ukraine's sovereignty and independence, expressed during their visit [to Ukraine], or will they prove that the decisions taken by the State Duma are their main objective? [end recording]

Ukraine: Rukh Leader Believes Duma Actually Dissolved CIS

LD1503192396 Kiev UNIAR in Ukrainian 1650 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — "This document is in no way legally binding on Ukraine, it only means that the Commonwealth of Independent States has actually been dissolved," Vyacheslav Chornovil, chairman of the People's Movement of Ukraine [Rukh] and member of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Ukraine, believes.

Chornovil believes that the decision by the Russian State Duma can be regarded as a propaganda trick aimed at supporting a Communist candidate at the upcoming presidential elections in Russia, rather than a genuine resolution. In the wake of this decision, Ukraine has an opportunity to establish relations with Russia and other former Union republics, now independent states, on the basis of direct interstate agreements, without any "superstructures" being involved.

Meanwhile, the issue of [Ukraine's membership in] the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly is removed from the agenda because the CIS has actually ceased to exist.

As regards our independence, it has nothing to do with the decision made by the State Duma, the Rukh leader said.

Ukraine: Nationalists Urge Firm Rejection of Duma's Pro-USSR Move

LD1603191096 Kiev UNIAN in Ukrainian 1245 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — "The vote in the Russian State Duma is a logical step in the Kremlin's long-term policy aimed at the restoration of the Russian empire," says a statement by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, circulated on 16 March, following the Russian State Duma's revocation of the Belovezh Pushcha agreements.

According to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Ukraine should initiate an alliance of independent states to counter Russia and "its unpredictable policy."

"A resolute response to Moscow's attempts to harness Ukraine will be for the Ukrainian Supreme Council to adopt the new Constitution as soon as possible," the organization said. The situation calls upon the government of Ukraine to step up cooperation with those countries that have already declared their protest against the Russian State Duma's adventurist policy, it added.

Ukraine: Donbass Leftists Meeting To Support Restoration of USSR

LD1603070396 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0659 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By Lyudmila Gordeyeva]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DONETSK, March 16 (ITAR-TASS) — The left-wing forces in Ukraine's eastern Donbass region are holding a conference in Donetsk to uphold "Friendship among nations and the restoration of the Soviet Union."

The conference is timed to coincide with the 5th anniversary of the Soviet referendum on the preservation of the USSR.

The organisers invited representatives of the left-wing organisations of Ukraine, Russia and some other republics of the former Soviet Union to attend the conference.

Ukraine: Kiev, Chisinau Complete Demarcation of State Border Section

LD1503204796 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1814 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Diplomatic Panorama" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, March 15 (INTERFAX-Ukraine) — Working groups of the Ukrainian-Moldovan commission for demarcating the state border coordinated a draft agreement on the borderline in the area of the Odessa and Vinnitsy regions during the third round of their talks, the Ukrainian border guard troops' press service told Interfax - Ukraine Friday.

The talks were held in Mogilev-Podolskiy, the Vinnitsy region.

The parties also considered their positions regarding the determination of the southern most point of the state border in the mouth of the Prut river, the same source said.

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The parties have so far failed to agree on this issue, the press service said.

Ukraine: U.S. Reportedly Arrests Citizens for Passing Information

WS1803094796 Kiev INTELNEWS in English 0156 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kiev, March 15 — Two U.S. citizens have been accused of transferring proprietary information to Ukraine and Russia.

Two company officials from Electrodine Systems of New Jersey, a firm which produces electronic equipment for military aircraft, vessels and satellites, have been apprehended in the U.S. and charged with illegally transferring secret radar system plans for fleet, missile guidance systems and flight monitoring systems to various military plants in Ukraine and Russia.

The two Americans, Dennis Natan (formerly of Iran) and Viktor Lander (formerly from the USSR) [names as received] are under investigation because they did not possess licenses for taking secret documents abroad, however, they have not officially been charged with espionage or the premeditated damaging of U.S. interests.

Since the end of the 1980s, their company received nearly 100 contracts from the Pentagon. In conformity with the contracts, all of their production had to be completed within the United States. But, according to a report published in VSEUKRAINSKIE VEDOMOSTI, the company violated this agreement and hired subcontractors in Ukraine and Russia, while concealing this fact from the U.S. government.

Products manufactured by Ukrainian and Russian plants were then illegally brought into the United States. Reports do not specify which plants in Ukraine and Russia were subcontractors of the company.

Ukraine: OSCE, UN Seen Doing Nothing To Prevent War in Crimea

MK1603135496 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 14 Mar 96 p 8

[Report by Viktor Yadukha: "Will Europe Reconcile Crimea With Ukraine?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Today the OSCE will convene its second "roundtable" in The Hague so as to reconcile Crimea with Ukraine. It already did this on one occasion last fall in Locarno, where Kiev solemnly promised to approve a compromise Crimean constitution in exchange for the refusal of Crimea to hold a referendum on independence. Having received what it desired, Ukraine forgot about its promise. So there is a new conflict now. This time, there cannot even be talk of any constitution of the Republic of Crimea, since in the draft new fundamental law of Ukraine, approved on first reading by the Supreme Rada [parliament], Crimea is now called "an autonomous entity" having a charter instead of a constitution. Crimean parliamentarians are again threatening Kiev with a referendum demanding that the draft law be rejected, that a Crimean constitution be approved, and that the authoritarian representation of the Ukrainian president in Simferopol be abolished. It looks as if any remnants of autonomy are going to be done away with, and Crimean parliamentarians made a grandiloquent statement saying that, if this were the case, they would be ready to "lead the struggle of their people for the restoration of their violated rights."

All this, of course, is nothing but rhetoric. For a long while now no one has felt pity for the Crimean parliament, since its self-dismembering deputies, politically, have long deprived themselves of hands and feet.

To tell the truth, no one feels pity for the present Crimean Republic either: It has no constitution and no president; its government is a kind of "field office" of the Ukrainian cabinet of ministers; and, for the second month now, this peninsula has been under the absolute rule of the Ukrainian president's governor-general, who under the present "Statute" can commit any outrage without any consequences for himself.

Moreover, Crimea as such, with all of its mythical and real riches, is in general of little interest to anyone. Everything that happens there — from political coups to gangster showdowns — is nothing but an instrument used in political games both at the national and world level, and this is causing certain misgivings.

On one hand, Crimea is involved in the conflict between President Kuchma and the Ukrainian Supreme Rada. When in 1994 the "freshly elected" Leonid Kuchma hinted (via his aides) to his Crimean colleague, Yuriy Meshkov, who raised his hand against his parliament, that he, Kuchma, would not mind getting rid of his peevish Rada himself — viewing Crimea, in this sense, as only a proving ground — he did not much play the hypocrite. Now, a year and a half later, the Ukrainian parliament is showing little difference from the Russian State Duma, both as regards its powers and the percentage of communists. It as if Mr. Kuchma is going to have the Rada "be done with" altogether, and the Crimean proving ground is perfectly suited for being used as a precedent.

It would be wise for the Rada to realize that the new draft constitution of Ukraine will provoke its own end. Strangely enough, however, even the communists, who

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have always felt sympathetic toward Crimea, unanimously supported the abolition of the republic. This can have just one explanation: Ukrainian communists need a social explosion as a pretext for them to seize power from Leonid Kuchma in the future.

On the other hand, in the chain of controllable hot spots on the political map of the former socialist camp — from Tajikistan to the Balkans — Crimea remains the only potential link where there is no large-scale war. The latest attempt to trigger it was made last year in Feodosiya, where previously unknown snipers started to shoot down the hill at an excited crowd of Crimean Tatars.

A month ago, the national movement of the Crimean Tatars made a statement noting that "virtually all ethnopolitical conflicts in the 20th century, in one way or another, were actually supported by superior external forces and, as a rule, were given rise by them." The statement says that Crimea is situated on a possible route of transportation of Caspian oil to the West. Countries which are to consume this oil are trying to impose their control over crude-oil regions by surrounding them with "permanent low-intensity war areas." In the opinion of many observers, the OSCE and UN missions accredited to Crimea and performing mediatory functions between Kiev and Simferopol are using double standards and in fact are doing nothing to settle the situation, as if waiting for the time when a foreign peacekeeping contingent can be brought to the peninsula.

If a referendum on Crimean independence is announced anyway (and is surely upset by forcible means), this could provide yet another opportunity for kindling an armed conflict on the peninsula, especially since the Black Sea Fleet in its present form will not present any serious obstacle now.

National Affairs

Ukraine: Kuchma: Referendum Likely To Back New Constitution

LD1503203296 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1910 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Presidential Bulletin" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Kuchma believes that the adoption of a new Ukrainian Constitution is most likely in a referendum. He made this statement to a member of the U.S. Supreme Court Bogdan Footey [as received], who arrived in Kiev at Kuchma's invitation.

Kuchma and Footey emphasized the extreme importance of an early adoption of Ukraine's new fundamental law.

Parliamentary speaker Aleksandr Moroz claims that the adoption of a constitution in a referendum would deceive the people and increase the split in society and that there were no guarantees all regions would support the constitution.

As he spoke at a conference of local officials at the town hall in Belaya Tserkov, the Kiev region, where he is on a working visit, Moroz criticized a number of clauses of the draft.

"No other constitution in Europe is that undemocratic," Moroz said and speculated that parliament would turn down the version of the fundamental law offered by the Constitutional Commission.

(The Constitutional Commission on March 11 approved of the draft of the Ukrainian Constitution produced by its work group and submitted it to parliament for consideration. - IF).

Moroz believes that "the draft has two fundamental flaws: the people are barred from forming bodies of power and correcting their actions." The draft constitution, he said, "fails to establish appropriate power-sharing."

Moroz also fears there will be heated debates in parliament over the clause saying that the president forms and controls the Cabinet of Ministers but is not responsible for its actions. Moroz believes that the government must be answerable to parliament.

He also argues that the draft constitution fails to ensure the independence of the judiciary and that it gives more powers to the executive bodies and less to local representative bodies.

At the same time Moroz noted the importance of the adoption of a new constitution no later than May 1996. The fundamental law must be democratic and guarantee the Ukrainian people's right to participation in forming bodies of power and to the control of their activity.

Ukraine: Crimean Parliament Threatens Referendum on Constitution

MM1503144796 Moscow TRUD-7 in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 11

[Untitled report by Lev Ryabchikov under the general heading: "Crimea in favor of a Republic" — from the "Ukrainian Issue" section]

[FBIS Translated Text] Simferopol — A motion to put the question of suspending the moratorium on holding a referendum on Crimean independence on the agenda of the Crimean Parliament's extraordinary session failed by three votes. Some 46 deputies declared themselves

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in favor. Although they accounted for more than half of those assembled in the hall of sessions, a majority of the total number of deputies was required for the decision to be adopted. Therefore only one question was submitted for discussion - - the political and legal situation that has developed in relations between Kiev and Simferopol in connection with the publication of the draft Ukrainian Constitution.

In Chapter 10 of this document the designation "autonomous Republic of Crimea" has been replaced by the concept of a "Crimean autonomous entity," and the term the "charter of the Crimean autonomous entity" has been substituted for the republic's Constitution. The Crimean parliament presidium described this in a statement as an attempt to abolish the republic. The presidium's statement on this subject says that, in spite of its promises, the Ukrainian Supreme Council has still not ratified the new Crimean Constitution. After a long discussion, parliament adopted a resolution proposing that the Ukrainian Supreme Council ratify the Crimean Constitution by the end of March. In the event of a delay in this procedure, the Crimean Parliament reserved the right to ratify the Constitution through an all-Crimea referendum.

The session also proposed that the Supreme Council and president abolish the institution of a Ukrainian presidential representative's office in Crimea.

Ukraine: Officials Give 'Thumbs Down' to Crimea Constitution

MM1503152796 Moscow TRUD-7 in Russian 15 Mar 96 p 11

[Untitled report by Mikhail Melnik under the general heading: "Crimea in Favor of Republic"; from the "Ukrainian Edition"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — "The Crimean Parliament's decision is nothing more than political posturing. They had no reason to hold an extraordinary session, because Crimea retains the status of an autonomous entity within Ukraine. This is clearly and unequivocally set out in the draft new Ukrainian Constitution." Ukrainian Justice Minister Serhiy Holovatyy stated this in an interview with an ITAR-TASS correspondent. According to him, the draft new Ukrainian Constitution provides a precise legal definition of the autonomous entity and the terminology for defining it. However, like the majority of Ukrainian parliamentarians the Ukrainian justice minister gave the draft new Crimean Constitution the "thumbs down." They consider that it was "drawn up for an independent state and not for an autonomous entity." It relates to territory, the trappings of state, language, and the organs of executive power. The draft new Crimean Constitution is now in the process of finalization.

"The status of the Crimean autonomous entity remains in the draft new Ukrainian Constitution, but Crimea should not have its own Constitution. This conflicts with all international norms. All relations with Crimea should be regulated by a Charter on the Autonomous Entity." Ukrainian Constitutional Commission working subcommittee members Volodymyr Shapoval and Mikola Kozyubra expressed this view at a press conference. They expressed the opinion that there cannot be two constitutions in an independent state. Experts consider that, if the Crimean Constitution is ratified, Ukrainian citizens from other oblasts will be considered foreigners.

Ukraine: Crimean Groups Call For End to 'Separatist Actions'

AU1503175596 Kiev URYADOVYY KURYER in Ukrainian 14 Mar 96 p 3

["Statement on the Situation in the Crimea"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The All-Crimean Taras Shevchenko "Prosvita" [Enlightenment] Society, the Crimean branch of the Union of Ukrainian Officers, and the All-Crimean Scientists' Society "Crimea With Ukraine" issued a statement addressed to Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, Supreme Council Chairman Oleksandr Moroz, Prime Minister Yevhen Marchuk, and Ukrainian Presidential Representative in the Crimea Dmytro Stepanyuk. The statement reads that the situation around the Crimea is again being artificially exacerbated. It is obvious that there cannot be two constitutions in a single state. It is therefore natural that the draft of the new Ukrainian constitution envisages a corresponding status for the Crimea. The Crimean legislators do not see tasks for themselves other than discussion of the artificially created problem of the Crimean constitution, stresses the statement. It proposes that an end be put to the irresponsible actions of the Crimean Supreme Council and also that separatist actions by the Crimean leadership be made impossible by the new Ukrainian constitution.

Economic Issues

Ukraine: Moroz Believes State-Run Enterprises Need State Credits

LD1503210696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1827 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV REGION, March 15 (INTERFAX - Ukraine) — Ukrainian Parliament Speaker Oleksandr Moroz believes that it is necessary

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to grant state credits to "the Ukrainian key industrial enterprises" in order "to revive production".

"It is necessary to urgently make up a list of enterprises of various sectors of the national economy", which are in need of such credits as soon as possible, O. Moroz said in the course of his working visit to the town of Bila Tserkva (Kiev region) on Friday.

He also disclosed that he intended to meet with Premier Yevhen Marchuk to discuss this issue as well as that of sources of financing.

O. Moroz believes that it is possible to prevent a winding-up of unprofitable enterprises through the founding of joint ventures on their basis. At the same time, he noted that "it is necessary to have in mind the adverse factor of the possible transformation of our mills into producers of spares only, rather than of ready-made machines".

O. Moroz named the Bila Tserkva farm machinery plant as one of the enterprises which are to be granted the state credit. "I can not see any other way out to revive its production", he said.

"The factory as unable to continue the manufacture of farm machinery without a [word indistinct]", said Valentin Ukrainets, director of the factory. In his words, the factory needs a credit "to the tune of 250 thousand million karbovanets".

Ukraine: Netherlands To Open Credit Lines for W. Ukrainian Companies

LD1403215396 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1925 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KYEV, March 14 (INTERFAX - Ukraine) — The Netherlands will open credit lines for investments into companies in Lvov region and all over the western regions of Ukraine.

A statement to this effect was made on Thursday by Dutch Premier Wim Kok during his visit to the meat and dairy farm in Zvertiv village (Lvov region).

Addressing a meeting with members of the Dutch delegation, Mykola Horyn, head of the Lvov regional state administration, noted that the Netherlands is the biggest foreign investor in Lvov region's economy.

According to him, investments from that country make 25.7 percent of the aggregate volume.

In the course of his meeting, M. Horyn addressed Prime Minister W. Kok with a request for further support in the development of the Dutch-Ukrainian "Farm Projects" joint stock company and assistance in the establishment of a joint Dutch-Ukrainian fund in support of Ukraine's agrarian sector with the participation not only of the government, but also of that country's private business.

The joint stock company is a joint project of the Dutch Economics Ministry and the Lvov Regional State Administration.

One of the objectives of the project is to develop an effective model for the development of technical assistance and preparation for the further development of modern farming in Ukraine through an effective use of investments.

The strategic objective is to combine Europe's two biggest agrarian potentialities — Dutch technologies and Ukrainian land resources for the production of high-quality and law-cost foodstuffs to meet the demand of the former Socialist countries, and, possibly, the Asian market.

The joint stock society was registered early in 1994. Seventy-five percent of the stocks belong to the Netherlands in the person of a special no-profit fund, 25 percent - to the Lvov regional state administration in the persons of the committee for the management of property of the region.

The joint stock company is a no-profit organization, where the income earned is re-invested in an expansion of the project.

The immediate prospect in the development of the projects, provided it is invested by the Dutch Government and investment also come from the internal sources, includes processing of potatoes, milk and rape, the creation of a wholesale vegetable market, the construction of food super-markets and fodder production.

The board of the joint stock company is chaired by Dutch Honorary Consul to Ukraine Bohdan Pankevych.

Ukraine: Pipeline Development Program To Increase Gas Transit

WS1803102796 Lvov INFOBANK in English 0805 GMT 18 Mar 96

[From the "News Service" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kiev — Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Oil, Gas and Oil-Processing Industry Dmytro Yeher said that the Committee elaborated Program on the development of pipeline transportation of Ukraine which provides for a 150 billion cubic meters increase in the annual transit of natural gas across Ukraine to Central and Western European countries up to 2006, as well as a considerable increase in oil transit from the West to the East, INFOBANK reports. The

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volume of oil exports across Ukraine depends on loading of a potential Odessa oil transshipment enterprise - terminal (its estimated capacity accounts for 40 million. ton of oil per year) and period of construction of the Oil Odessa-Brody pipeline.

According to Dmytro Yeher the overall loading capacity of Ukrainian gas pipelines allows for exports of 160 billion cubic meters of gas per year and provides 80 billion cubic meters of gas for domestic consumption. 110 billion cubic meters of gas were transported across Ukraine in 1995. In 1996 it is planned to export 124 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe. Meanwhile, Ukrainian transit capacity is limited by the fact that pipelines and gas pumping stations have been working without reconstruction for dozen of years. Profit of gas transit totaled in 1995 about $1 billion but it was not invested in repair and reconstruction of pipelines. Conversely, Ukrainian gas debt was paid with most part of it. According to estimations of State Committee on Oil, Gas and Oil-Processing industry in 1996-2010 the reconstruction of Ukrainian pipelines (along with the reconstruction and building of compressor stations) requires $1.5 billion.

The total length of Ukrainian main oil pipelines is 4 thousand kilometers. They may pump 125 million tons of oil per year. The annual capacity of Ukrainian transit oil pipelines is 65 million ton. In 1995 Ukrainian pipelines have pumped 66 million tons of oil (16 million tons were pumped into Ukrainian oil-processing plants, while 50 million tons - by transit abroad). 20 million tons of oil were pumped by Druzhba oil pipeline (including 18 million tons of oil were exported), 46 million tons were pumped by Prydniprovsk oil pipelines (including 32 million tons of oil were exported). Increase in rates of Russian oil transit by Druzhba oil pipeline from $4.53 in 1995 to $5.2 in 1996 will provide Druzhba enterprise with funds required for the reconstruction and repair of oil pipelines.

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Belarus

Belarus: Lukashenka Urges Building New 'Union State'

LD1503201096 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Vremya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka turned out to be closer to the idea of a full integration than anyone else, although he did have a reservation or two on this score.

[Begin Lukashenka recording] I would not like to give you a banal reply to the effect that a lot of water has passed under the bridge since. Unfortunately the former union will not exist. I do not know what union the future will bring, but there can be no doubt that we should be building a union state together with everyone that is willing to do so.

The future shape of this union will depend on the will of members of parliaments, first and foremost upon the presidents of states, it will be up to us what union we do build — maybe it will be even closer than before. [end recording] [video shows Lukashenka in skiing garb]

Belarus: Minister Says Duma Vote on CIS Accords To Have No Legal Effect

LD1503182396 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1629 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MINSK, March 15 (Interfax-West) — Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Syanko has said that the Russian State Duma's resolution on de facto denouncing the 1991 Belovezhye accords on abolishing the USSR and founding the CIS will have no legal effect "both for Russia itself and for other former Soviet member-entities which have become sovereign independent states."

Syanko told Interfax that he saw the Russian MPs' decision as "rather an internal political move."

"To declare the existence of the USSR is not enough for it to really exist," Syanko said. "In principle, the abolishment of earlier historic decisions can bring positive results only when the reality of life allows that," he said.

The Russian Duma's decision, "no matter how paradoxical it is, spawns the danger of discrediting the integration processes gaining momentum within the Commonwealth, primarily between Belarus and Russia," Syanko said.

The Russian parliament's resolution "may give birth to hopes doomed to non-implementation, primarily among millions of elderly people," Syanko said.

Meanwhile, Belarusian Parliamentary Chairman Semyon Sharetskiy has declined to comment on the Russian State Duma's decision.

Belarus: Communists Praise Russian Duma Vote To Restore USSR

LD1703164896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1337 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MINSK, March 17 (Interfax-West) — About 1,500 people rallied in Minsk Sunday to mark the fifth anniversary of the March 1991 referendum on the future of the USSR.

The rally has been organized by the Party of Belarusian Communists, Belarus' most numerous party.

The party's leaders said at the rally that they supported the Russian State Duma's resolution of March 15 de facto denouncing the 1991 Belovezh accords on dismissing the USSR and creating the CIS. Representatives of the Party of Belarusian Communists said they saw the State Duma's resolution as "a move towards restoring law and justice."

The party's leaders spoke out in favor of the Belarusian parliament also denouncing the 1991 Belovezh accords and recognizing the legal effect of the 1991 referendum in which the majority of Soviet citizens voted in favor of preserving the USSR.

Belarus: Rallies in Minsk, Homel Support Russian Duma Vote on USSR

WS1803095596 Minsk BELAPAN in English 0808 GMT 18 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A mass meeting devoted to the fifth anniversary of the USSR referendum, during which the majority of Soviet people spoke in favor of the preservation of the Soviet Union, took place on Masherov Avenue in Minsk on March 17. The rally was organized by the Belarusian Patriotic Movement and the Communist Workers and Peasants' Party. The rally was also supported by representatives of the Party of Communists of Belarus, the Movement for Social Progress and Justice, and the Union of Officers. The mass-meeting was attended by approximately 1,000 people. Most of them were of pensionable age. Some held red flags of the former Soviet Union and placards which read: "Return to Lenin's Path," "Say 'Yes' to the Soviet Union," "No NATO Eastward Expansion." Speaking at the rally presidential aide Syarhey Posakhaw said that "the document on the restoration of the Soviet Union

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should carry the Belarusian president's signature." Judging from speeches made at the rally, the Belarusian left forces pin their hopes on the restoration of the Soviet Union on President Lukashenka and the Russian State Duma. Speakers at the rally repeatedly stressed that this action was being held to support President Lukashenka's efforts for integration between Belarus and Russia.

A political mass meeting for the restoration of the Soviet Union on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the USSR referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union gathered around 1,000 people in Homel. It was organized by the bloc of left forces of the Homel region. Speakers at the rally condemned the politicians who had defied the decision of the people expressed five years ago. They also urged to back President Lukashenka's initiative on integration with Russia. Participants at the rally unanimously approved the text of a telegram addressed to the Russian State Duma in which they welcomed its resolution on the denouncement of the Byelavezhskaya Pushcha agreements. In this respect the Homel Regional Committee of the Party of Communists of Belarus announced that it would initiate the consideration of a similar resolution in the parliament through its faction of communists.

Moldova

Moldova: Snegur Says Russian Duma Vote on USSR 'Nonsense'

LD1703153696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1337 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] CHISINAU, March 17 (Interfax) — Moldovan President Mircea Snegur believes that the Russian State Duma's decision to de facto denounce the 1991 Belovezh accords on dismissing the USSR and founding the CIS cannot have any legal effect on Moldova, Russia or other CIS countries.

Snegur made such a statement at a news conference in the Moldovan capital of Chisinau in the late hours of Saturday.

On March 15 the State Duma (Russian parliament's lower chamber) adopted a resolution de facto denouncing the 1991 Belovezh accords and confirming the legal effect of the referendum of March 17, 1991, in which the majority of votes were cast in favor of preserving the USSR.

Snegur said he saw the Russian State Duma's resolutions as "nonsense."

State Duma deputies should "realize where and in which year we live," Snegur said.

"Despite all difficulties which we faced during this period, I believe it impossible to go back to the past after the five years of independence, sovereignty, freedom, openness and development of direct contacts with all countries of the world in all areas," Snegur said.

Moldova: Communist Leader Commments on Preserving Soviet Union

LD1503164496 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1301 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] CHISINAU, March 15 (Interfax) — If a new union is formed where the old USSR used to be, the governments of the joining republics will maintain their independence and sovereignty, Moldovan Communist leader Vladimir Voronin told a Friday press conference organized on the fifth anniversary of the all-Soviet referendum on maintaining the USSR, at which 76 percent of Moldovans voted to preserve the Soviet Union.

Countries entering the new union would maintain the attributes of their government, Voronin said.

The Moldovan Communist Party has been gaining ground in the past few years, now estimating it can easily draw 35-40 percent of the electorate, although it gained just 20 percent of the vote at the most recent local elections, Voronin said.

No single party, however, can win the upcoming presidential elections alone, he said. A leftist bloc has therefore been proposed, where the Communists will be joined by socialists, social-democrats, the currently ruling Agrarian-Democratic party, and others, he said.

Moldova: Defense Minister Ignores Snegur's Demand for Resignation

AU1503133196 Chisinau BASAPRESS in English 2050 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Chisinau, 14/03/1996 (BASApress) — Moldovan President Mircea Snegur, supreme commander of the Moldovan Armed Forces, today conferred with Pavel Creanga, Moldovan defense minister, and urged him to resign.

According to a presidential release, the reason for President Snegur's request was that Creanga "has not taken sufficient measures to ensure the integrity of the National Army's assets and efficient use of budget funds, as well as because he has exceeded the age limit for military service envisaged by the Law on Military Obligation and Service."

The release does not offer other details on today's meeting between President Snegur and Division General Creanga.

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A release from the Defense Ministry read that Creanga "cannot resign on the invoked reasons, let alone that this will represent a law violation."

The Defense Ministry release quoted Creanga saying the accusations are "groundless and mere allegations," because "during two years a number of commissions carried out checks in the Defense Ministry and uncovered no glaring law violations, and therefore statements of alleged corruption in the Ministry were not confirmed."

Creanga thinks the way he was asked to resign was illegal. Besides, his resignation right now will slow down the formation of military forces and jeopardize stability in the National Army given the complicated economic situation and political developments in Moldova.

Creanga fears that his resignation "would be used by forces that do not accept the minister's position on inadmissibility of army's interference in the political life of the country," according to the Defense Ministry press release.

Moldova: President To Issue Official Statement on Arrest

LD1603101796 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 0853 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Valeriy Demidetskiy]

[FBIS Translated Excerpts] Kishinev, 16 March — After the decree dismissing Defense Minister Pavel Creanga, signed on Friday by Moldova's President Mircea Snegur, the defense ministry building has been sealed off by armed soldiers and all telephones have been disconnected, sources in Moldova's armed forces reported.

Ten minutes from now an official statement by the president in connection with these events is expected.

Officers who do not wish to give their names describe what has has happened as a prelude to a military coup. They said there has been a split in the armed forces over the lastest events. Some of the subunits remain loyal to Defense Minister Pavel Creanga who was dismissed by the President. They said that Pavel Creanga's former deputy Nicolae Dabizhu [as received] who had been provisionally appointed defense minister by Mircea Snegur, has pressured officers.

There are rumours circulating that the dismissed minister was arrested last night by a special police subunit. So far that have not been officially confirmed.

It seems as though the president's decree has exacerbated the conflict between the head of the Moldovan state and the leader of the ruling Agrarian Democratic Party, Prime Minister Andrey Sangheliy. Pavel Creanga flatly refused to resign and told journalists that his removal was connected with the fact that "he had not permitted the army to interfere in politics". "If this happens, the 1992 war will appear like a mere trifle to us," Pavel Creanga said. [passage omitted]

The same sources said that the government met overnight behind closed doors to discuss this matter.

Under the Moldovan Constitution the president can replace a member of the Cabinet only after consultations with the prime minister and the parliamentary majority. However, some observers believe that supreme commander Mircea Snegur is not obliged to observe these formalities.

Moldova: President, Premier Disagree on Defense Minister Issue

LD1603125196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1206 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By Valeriy Demidetskiy]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Chisinau, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — Confrontation between Moldovan President Mircea Snegur and Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli seems to have come to a head after the President on Friday signed a decree firing Pavel Creanga as the Republic's Defence Minister.

Informed sources told Itar-Tass that the Republic's parliament called an emergency session to consider the conflict which is fraught with undesirable consequences for Moldavia.

The same sources said the Cabinet had met behind closed doors during the night but no details were immediately known. No one responds to telephone calls in the Defence Ministry.

On Friday, a majority in the parliament and part of the officer corps of Moldova spoke out against the resignation of the Defence Minister.

Under the Moldovan Constitution, the President may replace a Cabinet member only after consultations with the Prime Minister and the parliamentary majority. Some observers believe however that Mircea Snegur does not have to stick to these formalities in his capacity as the supreme commander-in-chief.

On Friday, Minister Creanga refused to step down and told journalists that his resignation was prompted by the fact that he "did not allow to involve the army in political games." "If this happens, the 1992 war would look like a children's game," the Minister said.

Sources in the national army who asked not to be named told journalists that Creanga had been arrested by a

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special police squad last night, but there has been no official confirmation of the rumour.

The President's aide for political matters Victor Josov told Itar-Tass he had no information about the matter.

Moldova: DM Creanga Outlines Stance Against Snegur

AU1603153196 Chisinau INFOTAG in English 2130 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Chisinau, March 15 (INFOTAG) — Moldovan President Mircea Snegur dismissed the republic's Defense Minister Pavel Creanga from his office by a decree, the president's press service reported on Friday [15 March] night. The report contains no details about the decree's contents.

Moldovan President Mircea Snegur held consultations with top officers in the Ministry of National Security today. He has demanded to work out and present the concept and main activity direction of the information department in the ministry, which have to be based on the principles of the country's external policy, and should proceed from the necessity to provide for Moldova's economic, social, and political interests.

Mr. Snegur urged the ministry to closely collaborate with the Ministry of Interior and the General Prosecutor's Office in struggling against crime and corruption, and in taking energetic measures to stop drug and weapon smuggling. The Moldovan legislation prohibits security organs to support this or that political party, the president has reminded.

Security Minister Vasile Calmoi has assured the head of state that the ministry will spare no efforts to back the president's activity in installing order and rule of law in Moldova, the presidential press service has reported.

The Moldovan minister of defense, Division General Pavel Creanga, has stated he cannot resign on reasons indicated by the president. On Thursday [14 March] the head of state and Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Mircea Snegur urged the general to resign due to the revealed facts of financial and other violations in his ministry, and due to Creanga's age, which is well beyond all military limits.

"I guess, in this particular case the problem is not in a military property plundering, and not in my age," Pavel Creanga stated at a press conference today. "During the past two years, the ministry was subject to dozens of financial and other checks undertaken by various state structures. The inspectors worked for about 300 days in total, but failed to find any gross violations of the legislation, as well as any proof of corruption by the ministry staff," the minister stated.

"I have never insisted on remaining on the post at whatever price. Rather on the contrary, in the past two years I applied for retirement several times, but each time I was denied. My resignation at the present moment may freeze the process of final shaping of the National Armed Forces, which finds an enthusiastic support of the officer corps. That is exactly why certain political forces do not like my presence on the post. They hate my principal stance, and my refusal to drag the Army into political gamesmanship. They are jealous about my attempts to consolidate the climate of stability in the country, the climate of respect for the Constitution and laws," General Pavel Creanga stressed. The minister of defense expressed his alarm that his resignation "may inflict moral damage to the armed forces staff, who may regard my departure as a betrayal of the common deed we started together."

"The orders of the commander-in-chief shall be fulfilled, but I am not going to retire the way my president suggests," Defense Minister Pavel Creanga stated at today's press conference. Mircea Snegur proposed to the division general to resign, having promised, in exchange, to sign a decree on granting [him] Moldova's highest award — the Stefan cel Mare Order.

"I have categorically refused. If somebody suggested my resignation one month ago, I would have agreed. But I cannot go after such grave accusations have been forwarded against myself and my ministry. These accusations are designed to discredit the Armed Forces and the minister. Maybe it is unethical of me to say so, but I believe the president has made a wrong move, and now I have to defend my name," Creanga stated.

He repeated his readiness to resign, but only in conformity with the Constitution and laws. After Snegur's proposition, the defense minister had conversations with the parliament chairman and prime minister, and described his position in a special written report sent to them, but no reaction of the two statesmen has followed yet.

Pavel Creanga let everybody understand that he will remain the minister in any case. In his words on Thursday night, after his statement was made public over the television, President Snegur telephoned to him and threatened with degradation. "I have been a general for 18 years by now, and am not afraid of the perspective. Rumors are long circulating that Moldova should have a civilian minister of defense," stated Pavel Creanga, who was plain-clothed today, to everyone's surprise.

In Creanga's opinion, the proposition to resign is related to the striving of certain political forces to involve the Army into politics. "During the four years of the

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National Army's existence there have been many such attempts," he said, and explained that he meant "political forces from the presidential surrounding."

In his words, his age cannot be a reason for resignation. He is 63 now, but was already older than the president-mentioned "deadline of 60" when he was appointed two years ago. His good health allows him to well remain at the post. In recent months, he had not applied to a single doctor, though has been working seven days a week, the general said.

The minister refuted information that some 500 officers have been dismissed from the Army recently. "There were several instances when officers left the national Armed Forces, but all of the cases were related to change of residence, or the people were fired due to violations of military discipline." He does not rule out that other officers may resign together with him — out of solidarity. A collective letter of officers — brigade commanders — was read out at today's press conference.

Presidential military adviser Alexandru Gorgan rules out any possibility of a coup d'etat in Moldova. "There exists no danger of the Armed Forces' coming out of control of the commander-in-chief. Pavel Creanga is being backed by no more than 10-20 persons in the Army. I assure you that an absolute majority of officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers want to serve normally and without being involved in such problems," Gorgan stated to INFOTAG right after the minister's press conference.

Snegur's further actions concerning the Ministry of Defense "will be in a strict conformity with the Constitution and laws," he said, and admitted a possibility that the president may enter into consultations with the prime minister, because a minister of defense's resignation can only be effected on premier's presentation, but through a presidential decree.

Answering our question why the commander-in-chief failed to undertake any measure to install order in the Army, Alexandru Gorgan explained that till very recently Snegur had no official documents about violations taking place in the ministry. "Now such documents are available," he said.

"Concerning the Stefan cel Mare Order, proposition to grant this award to the minister was made by the ministry staff long, long ago," Gorgan said.

He refuted the minister's assertions concerning attempts to involve the Army into politics, and stressed that the president is synonymously [as received] against the Armed Forces' politicalization, as can be seen from Snegur's numerous statements with that regard.

Fifty-four deputies from the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova and Socialist Unity factions signed a statement on Friday [15 March], which contains their concern about "the pressure by President Mircea Snegur on power ministers, aimed at forcing the ministers of defense and national security to resign." "Having started his electoral campaign from discrediting the parliamentary majority and the government, and using populist slogans in the social policy field, the president and his supporters in the Party of Revival and Accord (PRAM) have switched over to practical destructive actions," the document stresses.

Snegur's attempts to remove several government members without consultations with the prime minister have been regarded by the statement authors as "a gross violation of the Constitution."

"The striving to master, at whatever price, the power ministries clearly demonstrates that the president, who is also the leader of a political party, is seeking to utilize the military and security organs' potential in his presidential election struggle," the statement says.

The parliamentary majority views in that "a trend dangerous not only for the democratization process, but also for the country's stability and people's trust in the future."

"Any party seeks to participate in political struggle for power. But we do not accept the style and methods being used by the PRAM Chairman Mircea Snegur, who is the head of state, and whose key duty is to respect the Constitution, consolidate the society, and maintain peace in the country," the document emphasizes.

Moldova: Parliament Emergency Session Debates Creanga Dismissal

AU1603173396 Bucharest Radio Romania Network in Romanian 1600 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This afternoon the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova began an extraordinary session behind closed doors to debate the legality of the presidential decree by which Division General Pavel Creanga was deposed from his office as defense minister, reports our Chisinau correspondent Cristian Mihu, who cites a communique issued by the press office of the Moldovan Parliament.

So far Moldovan President Mircea Snegur, Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli, as well as representatives of the parliamentary factions have taken the floor to speak. The session is attended by members of the government, decisionmakers of the Court of Accounts, as well as judges of the Supreme Court of Justice and the General

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Prosecuting Magistracy, mentions the communique issued by the Chisinau Parliament.

Moldova: Snegur, Parliament Reach 'Compromise' on Creanga Issue

LD1603223296 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 2139 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Valeriy Demidetskiy]

[FBIS Translated Text] Chisinau, 17 Mar — It seems that Moldova's parliament and president have reached a compromise in settling the conflict situation in connection with the dismissal of Defense Minister Pavel Creanga. After a debate lasting several hours, the Moldovan parliament decided late on 16 March to send the presidential decree dismissing the defense minister to the Constitutional Court. Prior to this a moratorium on cadre reshuffles in the army was declared.

Two ministers are to be in charge of the army until the Constitutional Court's decision — the dismissed Pavel Creanga and Tudor Dabija, his first deputy, who has been temporarily appointed by the president.

Moldova: Snegur To Abide by Court Decision on Defense Minister

LD1703080896 Moscow Mayak Radio Network in Russian 0700 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Moldova President Mircea Snegur will abide by the decision of the Constitutional Court on the legal validity of his decree dismissing the defense minister, General Creanga. The president made this statement today at the end of the Moldova parliament sitting. He said the acting minister of defense, General Tudor Dobizha, will carry out the current ministerial functions and ensure order in the army.

The dismissed General Creanga will remain at the Ministry of Defense building pending the court decision.

Moldova: Armed Forces Under Control Despite Tension

LD1803095496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0848 GMT 18 Mar 96

[By Anatoliy Yurkin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, March 18 (Itar-Tass) — Tension that arose in the Moldovan power structures following the firing of Defense Minister Pavel Creanga by President Mircea Snegur has not affected the service and training of the Russian troops stationed in Moldova's Dniester region, Russian Commander Lieutenant-General Valeriy Yevnevich said in an exclusive interview with Itar-Tass today.

"The events in Chisinau were largely dictated by the internal political situation and were closely related to the coming elections in Moldova. It is an internal affair of a sovereign state and Russian troops have nothing to do with them," Yevnevich told Tass be telephone.

The parliamentary majority and Prime Minister of Moldova Andrei Sangheli declared earlier that the President had violated the Constitution by firing Creanga without preliminary consultations with the Prime Minister and the parliamentary majority and by appointing Creanga's First Deputy Tudor Dabija as acting Defence Minister. It was decided to let the Constitutional Court decide on the legitimacy of the President's moves.

Asked whether the events in Chisinau might possibly affect the transportation of the excess military equipment of the former 14th army to Russia, General Yevnevich stressed that the operation depended not on reshuffles in the Moldovan Defence Ministry but on the financial potential of the Russian Defence Ministry.

Considerable outlays are needed to dispatch the remaining trainloads of military equipment to Russia but money is provided in small amounts and irregularly, the General said. He added however that work continued, and in the nearest future, the Russian troops in the Dniester region will only have the equipment, arms and ammunition required for the performance of their regular tasks.

The situation in Chisinau is no way related to the ban on the elimination of the remaining ammunition which has long since outlived its life-span and cannot be transported to Russia.

"Two or three days are enough to eliminate the shells and mines manufactured before and directly after World War II. The ammunition has been sorted out and prepared for elimination. Negotiations are now underway with the regional administration which is considering 'ecological aspects of the possible explosions'," General Yevnevich said.

"We have balanced business relations with the leadership in Chisinau and Tiraspol, and these relations will not be affected by the temporary internal political difficulties which have arisen in the Moldovan Republic," the General stressed.

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Armenia

Armenia: Ter-Petrosyan Calls Duma's USSR Decision 'Provocation'

LD1503193096 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Statement by Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan on 15 March, place not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] The decision of the Russian State Duma to revoke the Belovezh agreements can only be regarded as a provocation aimed against the sovereignty of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States, dictated by purely opportunistic interests. It is aimed at covering up the truth about the true culprits responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union — namely the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] with its 70-year long anti-people, despotic regime and the authors of the suicidal August 1991 putsch.

As far as the initiators of the Belovezh agreements are concerned, I am profoundly convinced that Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk, and Stanislaw Shushkevich merely acknowledged the fait accompli of the collapse of the criminal empire and, thereby, basically saved the peoples of the Soviet Union from a ruinous development of events similar to what happened in Yugoslavia.

Armenia: Parties Support President's Condemnation of Duma Decision

LD1603185896 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 1252 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Tigran Liloyan]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yerevan, 16 Mar — The leaders of six political parties in Armenia comprising the ruling majority in parliament — the "Respublika" association — today issued a statement regarding the Russian State Duma's decision denouncing the Belovezh agreements. They welcomed yesterday's statement by the Armenian president condemning the State Duma's decision.

"We urge the Armenian authorities to remain true to the referendum on independence of 21 September 1991, to defend at any price the constitutional system of the Republic of Armenia, and to resolutely thwart any provocation directed against the national interests and independent statehood," the statement says.

The leaders of the Armenian political parties believe that the State Duma's decision virtually ignores the indisputable historic realities, and an attempt is being made to restore the Soviet Union. The State Duma's decision, the statement says, "flouts international law, the sovereignty of the states that emerged on the territory of the former USSR, and the freedom of peoples."

Armenia: Radio Carries President's Statement on Russian Duma Decision

NC1503203596 Yerevan Armenia's Radio First Program Network in Armenian 1900 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Statement issued by the president of the Armenian Republic on 15 March — radio headline; read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Russian State Duma resolution on invalidating the Belovezh Agreement should be seen as nothing but a provocative action aimed against the sovereignty of the CIS member countries. The resolution, purely motivated by opportunistic interests, aims at disorienting society and at hiding the truth about the real culprits responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union—the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] with its 70- year antipopular and dictatorial regime, the authors of the August 1991 conspiracy.

As for the initiators of the Belovezh Agreement, I firmly believe that Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich simply reconciled with the fait accompli of the collapse of the criminal empire and thereby, in effect, saved the peoples of the Soviet Union from the path of the destructive Yugoslavia-type developments.

I regard the Duma's decision as an overt move by Communist revanchism, a move that could produce an explosive situation fraught with unpredictable consequences, not only in Russia, but also in all the CIS countries.

But I do not doubt that all the CIS countries will deal a resolute counter-blow to that [word indistinct] Communist challenge.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan: Aliyev Attacks Duma Decision on Belovezh Accords

LD1603183296 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1548 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By Sevindzh Abdullayeva and Viktor Shulman]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] BAKU, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — Azerbaijani President Geydar Aliyev said the Russian State Duma's decision scrapping the Belovezh Pushcha agreements and restoring the Soviet Union "causes surprise, to say the least."

"The resolution by the State Duma of Russia repealing the Belovezh Pushcha agreements, which is viewed as

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the restoration of the Soviet Union, causes surprise, to say the least," Aliyev told journalists on Saturday.

"It is surprising that the State Duma is trying to find and punish those responsible for the disintegration of the Soviet Union," he said.

The Soviet Union ceased to exist not because of the Belovezh Pushcha agreements, but because of objective historic, social and political processes which occurred in the 1980s in the world, including in the USSR, he added.

"This was bound to happen and it happened," Aliyev said.

"As for Azerbaijan, it adopted a new constitution at a referendum last year, and this constitution is based on national freedom, sovereignty and state independence.... Azerbaijan will never give up its independence."

Azerbaijan: Party Leaders Denounce Duma Decision on Belovezh

NC1603201596 Baku TURAN in English 1639 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baku/16.03.96/TURAN — "Decision of the Russian Duma has not any legal ground. Return to the previous times is impossible," commented on the decision of the Russian Duma on denunciation of Belovezh agreement Deputy Chairman of the Party "Yeni Azerbaycan" Ali Nagiyev. According to him, Azerbaijan was recognised in the world community as an independent state and there are not any forces able to turn it away from the way of independence. "Decision of the Russian Duma can only make the situation tense in Russia," he said.

"This decision testifies further polarisation of political forces in Russia. Azerbaijan should take measures so that this decision did not have any negative effect. However, from the legal point of view this decision is not legal," commented on the decision of State Duma leader of the APNI [Azerbaijan National Independence Party] Etibar Mamedov.

According to the leader of Social-Democratic Party Zardusht Alizade, there is also the Almaty pact which was signed late in December 1991. "Just the Almaty agreement announced about creation of the CIS which unites 12 republics of the former USSR, with the exception of Baltic countries," he said. According to Alizade, this decision of the Russia Duma was aimed for obtaining of the votes of certain part of the electorate on the eve of presidential elections in Russia. "Not any new state will want to lose its independence," Alizade noted.

Secretary of Musavat party Arif Hajiyev noted that the decision of Russian Duma, though it provides some dangerous tendencies in Russia, should not make any impact on Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan should be ready to resist any attempt on limitation of its independence and freedom," Deputy Party PFA [People's Front of Azerbaijan] Ali Kerimov said.

Georgia

Georgia: Shevardnadze Says Duma Decision Weakens Trust

LD1503184496 Tbilisi Radio Tbilisi Network in Georgian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As it has already been reported, the State Duma of the Russian Federal Assembly passed a resolution today on denouncing the Belovezh agreement. In this connection, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze said that the State Duma resolution could only weaken the mutual trust already established among the CIS member states and the integration processes already under way.

Georgia: Speaker Urges Special Parliament Meeting on Duma USSR Vote

LD1603163096 Tbilisi BGI in Russian 1500 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] [No dateline as received] — Here is a statement from Georgian Parliament Chairman Zurab Zhvania:

On 15 March, the Russian State Duma made an important decision which effectively amounts to a denunciation of the Belovezh Agreement and calls for the restoration of the USSR. Taking into account the role and functions of the legislature envisaged by the Constitution, this decision can have no real influence on the current situation. Nevertheless, it merits consideration from the political and legal points of view and can affect developments before the presidential elections and beyond.

Georgia has been given an opportunity to analyze Russian-Georgian relations in modern history and to make changes to its attitude toward Russia and the CIS now that the legal existence of the CIS has been called into question and an attempt has been made to reanimate the USSR.

I propose that the Georgian Parliament or an extraordinary session of the parliamentary buro be immediately convened to determine the parliament's position on this issue.

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Georgia: Abkhaz Communists Support Russian Duma's Resolution on USSR

LD1703081696 Tbilisi Radio Tbilisi Network in Georgian 0700 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Citing the press center of the Tbilisi- based Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, KONTAKT news agency has reported that a meeting was held by the leadership of the Abkhaz Communist Party. The meeting adopted a resolution signed by the chairman of the executive committee of the party, Oleg Danelia.

The participants in the meeting expressed unanimous support for the resolution on the revocation of the Belovezh Agreements, passed by the State Duma of the Russian Federal Assembly. We, Abkhaz patriots, support objectives and tasks of the Russian Communist Party and express once again our negative stance towards the disintegration of the Soviet Union and expect Russian communists to take more concrete and more resolute steps, the resolution of Abkhaz communists said.

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Estonia

Estonia: Tallinn Unimpressed by Russian Duma Vote on CIS Treaty

LD1503205896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1959 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TALLINN, Mar 15 (Interfax) — The effective denouncement by the Russian State Duma of the Belovezh Accords, the treaty abolishing the Soviet Union and creating the CIS, "has no practical meaning for Estonia," Estonian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mari-Ann Kelam told Interfax Friday.

According to her, Estonia "was annexed into the Soviet Union by force in 1940, which is why the intentions of various political forces to recreate something akin to the former Soviet Union have no meaning for us."

The Duma decision "demonstrates the inability of some of Russian deputies to make a realistic assessment of historic developments," said Kelam.

At the same time, "Estonia intends to normalize relations with Russia and considers the task to be a foreign policy priority."

The Russian Duma voted Friday to abolish the Russian parliament resolution of December 12, 1991, On the Denouncement of the 1922 Treaty on the Formation of the USSR.

Estonia: Thousands Rally in Tallinn in Support of Orthodox Religion

LD1603195396 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1842 GMT 16 Mar 96

[By Albert Maloveryan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TALLINN, March 16 (Itar-Tass) — Over 15,000 Orthodox believers took to the street in Tallinn on Saturday to participate in a procession in support of their religion.

The procession was organised to express disagreement with the Estonian authorities' policy aimed at dividing Orthodox believers and transferring the control over the Estonian Apostle Orthodox Church to the Constantinople Patriarchate.

A spokesman for Archbishop Kornily, the head of the Estonian Apostle Orthodox Church, told Itar-Tass that head of the Constantinople Patriarchate Bartholomew and head of the Finnish Orthodox Church Archbishop Johannes have been involved in these political games.

He said their actions interfere with the internal affairs of Estonia's Orthodox Church.

This is the second such procession in Estonia in the last several months. The first one was held in December 9, 1995.

Estonia: Foreign Minister Returns From Visit to Japan

LD1803113596 Tallinn Radio Tallinn Network in Estonian 1800 GMT 17 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Siim Kallas returned from his week-long visit to Japan. Kallas said that the border issue with Russia is one of the spheres where Estonia could do with Japanese support and in theory this support is possible. Japan is interested in Estonia's position on the expansion of the UN Security Council. According to Kallas, it is quite clear that if the Security Council is expanded it would be logical to include Japan.

The aim of Siim Kallas's visit to Japan was to intensify relations between Estonia and Japan and to present the climate for investment in Estonia. There was no talk of any specific investment program or economic cooperation. This is what Riina Kionka, head of the policy department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Estonia proposed the introduction of visa-free travel between the two countries. The Japanese promised to consider the matter, but in Kionka's view this is not likely to be realized in the near future.

Latvia

Latvia: Foreign Ministry Official on Duma Move on Belovezh Accord

LD1503192196 Riga Radio Riga Network in Latvian 1800 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Commenting on the resolution by the Russian State Duma on the Belovezh agreement is Rihards Mucins, press secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry.

[Mucins] So far I have only seen a paraphrase of this resolution. At this stage the comment would be as follows: that we do not remain indifferent to what goes on in our neighbor country, although of course this kind of resolution is more of a declarative nature, and of course in no way does it apply to the Baltic countries. It has been (?repeatedly) recalled that none of the Baltic countries would have signed this Belovezh agreement. The adoption of such a (?resolution) definitely indicates the political situation in Russia at present, on the eve of the anticipated presidential elections. The Communist Party has announced in its declaration that its aim

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is the restoration of the former USSR. Well, this is (?simply) a declarative step that confirms that view. Its adoption shows in fact that in adopting such a resolution the Russian State Duma seems to believe that Russia needs to (?depart from) the CIS. In a way it (?shows) that up to now the government's attitude has been more oriented toward strengthening cooperation within the CIS framework. The Russian State Duma is in a certain [words indistinct]; at the same time, even greater influence (?is coordinated) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now ed) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now ed) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now ed) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now ed) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now ed) with the current constitutional president, and in fact the president will to a great extent decide how the situation develops from now on, about this resolution. [passage indistinct]

Latvia: Ministry Spokeman Says Duma Vote Will Have Little Effect

WS1803103996 Tallinn BNS in English 1308 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riga, Mar 16, BNS — The Russian State Duma's passed resolution on denouncing the so-called Belovezh agreement will have no practical effect on the Baltic states, Latvian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Rihards Mucins told BNS.

"The decision cannot be referred to the Baltics because of the well-known historical, juridicial and political reasons," noted Mucins.

He said that none of the Baltic countries has signed the Belovezh agreement, which formally buried the Soviet Union and was the basis for the CIS. When the document was signed, the Baltic states were independent "de facto" and juriducially have never been incorporated into the Soviet Union.

Mucins said that the Latvian Foreign Ministry does not have a full version of the resolution therefore it may give its opinion only on the basis of the document's reflection in mass media.

He noted that the ministry is eager to get the full text of the resolution as "we cannot be indifferent to what is going on in our neighboring countries."

When asked by BNS about possible threat to sovereignty of the Baltic states, Mucins said that nothing has been said in the resolution in what way Russia plans to re-integrate the former Soviet republics.

"It is clear that all twelve CIS member states have their own interests and their cooperation in the frames of CIS shows that a common stance is not easy to be found in many issues," said Mucins.

He noted that parliament of one state has no right to decide on fates of other CIS states. Mucins concluded that passing of such resolution "must be viewed in the context of Russia's interior policy" taking into account the upcoming presidential elections in this country.

"The state Duma has a significant role in forming the state policy, but the Russian constitution foresees even greater role for the state president," said Mucins.

Lithuania

Lithuania: Vilnius 'Observing With Concern' Duma Decisions

LD1503191596 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 15 Mar 96

[From the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Lithuanian prime minister has said that the Duma decision denouncing the Belovezh agreement will not have any legal repercussions for Lithuania.

The prime minister's statement stresses that Lithuania is observing with concern the political tendencies appearing in the Duma, which do not promote the development of neighborly relations, the Lithuanian Government thinks.

Lithuania: Minister Says Duma Decision Has 'No Legal Implications'

LD1603112796 Vilnius Radio Vilnius Network in Lithuanian 1000 GMT 16 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Yesterday [15 March], the Russian Duma renounced the legal act which destroyed the Soviet Union and created preconditions for setting up the CIS. [passage omitted]

The decision of the Russian Duma does not concern Lithuania, reads the statement by Prime Minister Mindaugas Stankevicius about the decision. Russo-Lithuanian relations are based on the 29 July 1991 treaty

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on the foundations of interstate relations through which Russia has recognized the 11 March Act on the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania. Therefore, the Russian Duma decision concerning the Belovezh Agreement has no legal implications for Lithuania, the prime minister said. [passage omitted]

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